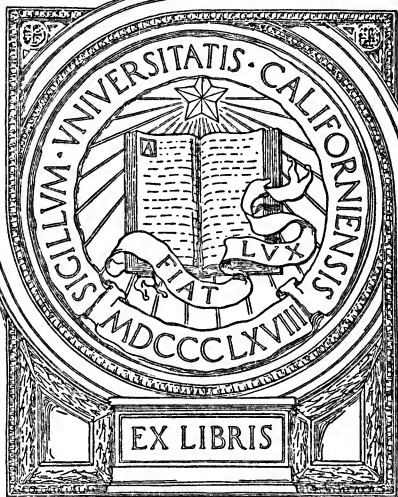


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CORIOLANUS. — WHAT IS THE MATTER,
YOU DISSENTIOUS ROGUES!

Act I. Scene 1.

CRITICISMS

OF

JOHN PEGGIER KEMBLE ESQ.

With an original Critique
on his Performances

by

John Ambrose Williams.

AUTHOR OF METRICAL ESSAYS.



THE FORCE OF HIS OWN MERIT MAKES HIS WAY.

Shakspeare.

LONDON.

Published by T. Holt, 1. Catharine Street, Strand.

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LAURENCE DONATION

NO YIMU
ALBION LAD

SONNET

TO

J. P. KEMBLE, Esq.

Shame to the age! if not a muse were found
To bid to thee one verse harmonious flow,
Thee, to whom Shakespeare's muse so much doth owe,
For action, thought-inspir'd, and artful sound,
Worthy his mighty lays, which, though uncrown'd
With elocution's charms, are music still;
Numbers so sweet, fruits of fair Nature's skill,
That latest time shall witness them renown'd.

But mix not, Kemble, with thy garland green
A leaf autumnal—one of paler hue—
Thy days of proudest triumph thou hast seen,
And immortality shall be thy due,
If Wisdom place a timely veil between
Thy soul's full faculties and the world's view.

ISLINGTON,
April 26, 1816.



From the original.

HENRY. _____

WHO IS THE WRETCHED HEIR?

PENRUD. _____ RODERICK PENRUDDOCK.

Wheel of Fortune Act 2. Scene 3.

MEMOIR

OF

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE.

THOSE arts with which the morals and progress of a nation are connected must always possess a most exalted claim upon taste and admiration, as well in relation to the intellect displayed in the arts themselves, as to the utility of their design. Poetry and Painting are generally allowed to have a closer connexion with refinement and civilization than any other species of art or science—and, however the vulgar and sanctimonious of mankind may undervalue them, History proves that to whatever degree of perfection these arts have attained in any country, there also, in proportion, have the results been advantageous. The Drama, however, may be considered as, in a great measure, blending these two arts into one, and thereby, with the superadded advantages of life and motion, advancing a strong plea to superiority over either. For if the Stage be a “Mirror,” and poetry and action are essential to dramatic exhibitions, representations of this nature may, with strict propriety, be characterized as **ANIMATED PAINTINGS**. In witnessing a fine play well acted, the spectator feels that interest and gratification doubled, which would naturally arise in his bosom on perusing an excellent poem, or contemplating a beautiful picture. For though a fine imagination and a masterly hand may per-

form much, yet we are all aware that no representation of either the poet or the painter affects us so sensibly as the events of real life, to which the mimic incidents of the Drama bear a close relationship. The greatest and most varied talents are necessary to constitute a good performer; and the character of the Stage, as above given, resting upon incontestible proof, it is impossible to discern any rational foundation for denying to the histrionic profession as high honours and applause as are bestowed on any other class of the liberal arts. Many and noble characters society and their country have had to boast selected from this profession; but amidst its living ornaments no one stands more conspicuously eminent than the subject of these memoirs.

Mr. ROGER KEMBLE, the father of the present celebrated family of that name, was a Roman Catholic, and originally a barber: he followed his trade for some time at Barnet, and afterwards at Rochester; from thence he went to Deal, and married the daughter of one WARD, manager of a strolling company, and commenced actor. He was, however, so meanly thought of in his new profession, that the father of his wife sarcastically remarked, he had a strong inclination to forgive her, though the match was against his consent, as she had kept her word with him, in one respect at least, and that was never to marry an *actor*. But, paradoxical as it may appear, there are some men who are merely dunces as workmen, yet obtain applause and profit when raised to the direction and management of others. This was evidently the case with Mr. ROGER KEMBLE, as the company of which he was soon afterwards chief, became, from his talents and attention, the most famous troop of itinerants of the day. It was under these auspices our hero first saw the light.

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE is stated to have been born at Preston, in Lancashire, in the year 1757; and was sent at an early age to a Catholic seminary of much eminence, situated at Sedgely Park, in Staffordshire. It would seem, however, that young KEMBLE's school exercises were occasionally interrupted by others of a different description, as we learn from a play-bill, which is still preserved, that he was admitted, while a mere child, a member of the *corps dramatique* headed by his father. As the said bill, from its being connected with the early history of the KEMBLE family, is curious, as well as from its relating to the subject of this memoir, it shall be here transcribed.

Worcester, *l'ebruary* 12, 1767.

Mr. KEMBLE's Company of Comedians.

At the Theatre, at the King's Head, this evening will be performed a Concert of Music, to begin exactly at six o'clock.

Tickets to be had at the usual places.

Between the parts of the Concert will be presented *gratis*, a celebrated Historical Play, (never performed here) called

KING CHARLES THE FIRST.

The characters to be dressed in ancient habits according to the fashion of those times.

The part of *King Charles*, Mr. JONES.*

Duke of Richmond, Mr. SIDDONS.†

Marquis of Lindsay, Mr. SALISBURY:

Bishop Juxon, Mr. FOWLER.

General Fairfax, Mr. KEMBLE.

Colonel Ireton, Mr. CRUMP.

* Of whom further mention will be made in the ensuing pages.

† Afterwards the husband of the great actress.

Colonel Tomlinson, Mr. HUGHES.*

The part of *Oliver Cromwell*, Mr. VAUGHAN.

Servant, Mr. BUTLER.

James, Duke of York (afterwards *King of England*),

Master J. KEMBLE.†

The *Duke of Gloucester* (King Charles's younger son) Miss FANNY KEMBLE.‡

Serjeant Bradshaw (Judge of the pretended High Court of Justice) Mr. BURTON.

The young *Princess Elizabeth*, Miss KEMBLE.§

Lady Fairfax, Mrs. KEMBLE.

The part of the *Queen*, Mrs. VAUGHAN.

Singing between the acts by Mrs. FOWLER and Miss KEMBLE.

To which will be added a Comedy, called
THE MINOR.

And on Saturday next the 14th Inst. will be again presented the above Tragedy, with a Farce that will be expressed in the bills for the day.

* * * The days of performance are Mondays,
Thursdays, and Saturdays.

It is rather remarkable that after being thus christened, as it were, a player, his father should have intended him for the profession of a priest. Upon what grounds the old gentleman formed this design is not known, unless it may be supposed that the life of an actor occasioned him some tremours of conscience, and the convenience of having one part of the family capable of absolving the sins of the rest was a temptation too inviting to be resisted. One would not imagine that he saw any thing attracting in the fate of his ancestor,|| who fell a

* The late proprietor of Sadler's Wells and Weymouth theatres.

† The subject of this biography.

‡ Mrs. Twiss.

§ Mrs. Siddons.

|| The person here alluded to was a Roman Catholic

sacrifice to the persecution of the times in the reign of Charles the First; to be sure the character of the age was different, and Mr. R. KEMBLE could hardly apprehend a similar misfortune to his son.

After remaining a period of sufficient duration at Sedgely Park, young KEMBLE was removed to the English College at Douay, where he was properly instructed in the rudiments of the Greek and Latin languages. While at the latter place, he was particularly distinguished for his strength of memory, refined taste, and distinct enunciation. But though Mr. KEMBLE has since afforded proofs that he was not inattentive to his college studies, yet his then restricted mode of life, or the prospect before him not according with the inclinations of a youthful and sanguine mind, induced him to quit Douay before he had attained the age of twenty.

The young fugitive landed at Bristol, whence he proceeded on foot to Gloucester, where, hearing that his father's company was playing at Brecknock, he continued his peregrination thither; but, on his arrival, had the mortification to meet with a cool reception. It is said, his father even refused to relieve him, and that he was indebted to the generosity of the itinerant players for a subscription, to which his father was prevailed on, with reluctance, to add a guinea, to enable him to subsist. On experiencing this instance of *paternal* regard, Mr. KEMBLE did not long continue in the "home of

priest in the reign of Charles the First, and was tried and executed at Hereford—the place where the execution took place is now the race-ground, and known by the name of Wide-Marsh. His hand was cut off, and continued in the possession of Mr. Foreman, a respectable Catholic within two miles of the town, and was in great esteem by the superstitious, who used it to touch wens, &c. under the insane idea that it possessed supernatural virtues.

his father," but hastened to Wolverhampton, where he joined CHAMBERLAIN and CRUMP's company, and made his *debüt* in the character of *Theodosius*, in the "Force of Love." His first effort was not very successful. His second attempt was *Bajazet*, in the play of "Tamerlane," in which he was more fortunate.

It cannot be supposed the receipts of a provincial actor are great; Mr. KEMBLE, in this respect, was not more fortunate than his brethren, and though regarded as a rising performer, there was an extreme negligence, and a tendency to dissipation in his conduct, which operated as a considerable drawback upon his interests.

When Mr. KEMBLE commenced his histrionic career, there existed an actor of some popularity in provincial theatres, of the name of JONES. This man was patronized by GARRICK for his ingenuity in making paper models, scenes, &c. to imitate carved work; a beautiful specimen of his workmanship, we understand, is still preserved in the collection formed by that gentleman. Whatever degree of talent he might have possessed as an actor, his name was certainly considered by the managerial potentates of barns and cock-lofts as a "tower of strength." Our reason for introducing him to the reader is, that we may mention a fact with which his name is connected. The bills which announced the early performances of Mr. KEMBLE, stated he would act *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and other characters, *after the manner of Mr. JONES*.

At this time, Mr. KEMBLE's pecuniary resources were in so low a state that, it is related of him, he could not even pay his laundress the sum of *fifteen pence*, nor obtain credit for that amount. She consequently refused to deliver him a shirt, the only one belonging to his wardrobe, and which he was in urgent want of, to dress for his part, *Venti-*

dus, in "All for Love," till she was paid; and he was actually reduced to the necessity of shifting an odd ruffle from one wrist to the other, alternately, during the performance, concealing the naked one in his cloak, so as to prevent the audience from noticing the *mal-upropos* deficiency.

Another instance of his poverty is the well-known adventure of the whipping-top. Being in arrears with his landlady, and not able to satisfy her importunate demands for payment, he practised the following expedient:—In the room exactly under that occupied by Mr. KEMBLE the good woman's *cara sposa* lay ill, and as the apothecary was one day quitting the house, he left directions that the patient should be kept *quiet*; KEMBLE overhearing the injunction, instantly conceived the idea of converting the prescription of ESCULAPIUS to his own advantage. This he did by spinning a top, under the pretence of exercise being necessary to his health, with incessant noise and velocity, continuing this troublesome motion till his hostess was glad to purchase peace on any terms; a bargain was therefore struck, and Mr. KEMBLE took his departure exempt from all charges.

CRUMP and CHAMBERLAIN are described by RYLEY in the "Itinerant," the former as being "a blunt, morose, brutish character; the latter, sly and cunning: they were commonly known by the names of Fox and BRUIN!" When KEMBLE left them, he chalked the following couplet upon the theatrical barn door:—

I fly to shun impending ruin,
And leave the Fox to fight with Bruin.

Having released himself from the managerial authority of these gentlemen, he strolled about the country in company with a person who went under the name of CARLETON, practising sundry schemes

and experiments in order to raise a poor supply of daily necessities; among others he adopted the profession of a Methodist preacher, wore the mask of piety on his features, and looked and prayed with an air of such real devotion, that if he was not sincere, he was at least entitled to the praise of good *acting*—but that is praise to which he is always entitled. What encouragement or rewards his labours of seeming piety met with we do not know, but in the end he returned to his old occupation.

Another project which, jointly with the person above mentioned, he put in execution, was a species of entertainment, in which KEMBLE was to *lecture*, and his partner achieve feats of *legerdemain*. The former was successful in obtaining one part of his object, to wit—applause; but neither of them much increased their financial stock. A ludicrous event which occurred at Cheltenham put an end to this *serio-comic* connection. While Mr. KEMBLE was delivering a grave moral dissertation, his companion was detected with the wife of a carpenter, (who had been employed to construct a temporary wooden convenience for the purposes of the exhibition,) in a situation of *gallantry* not quite consistent with the sentiments of morality which our hero was endeavouring to inculcate. The outcry occasioned by this unlucky *faux-pas* compelled the adventurers to decamp with precipitation.

Penury will often lead a man into strange vicissitudes and ludicrous embarrassments; the life of a strolling player is fruitful in examples of *distress* mingled with the *ridiculous*. The following incident in the life of our hero is amusing, though doubtless it was not very pleasant to his feelings at the time.

“In one of those miserable places which *were*

used as theatres, in some of the respectable towns of England, the male actors dressed and undressed themselves in a kind of cock-loft over the stage. KEMBLE having taken off his coat to deck himself in the trumpery finery of the theatrical wardrobe, cautiously stowed it in a nook, between the rafters of the building and the roof. Every one knows the adventurous daring of boys to gratify their curiosity, and get a peep at the scenic wonders from which their poverty excludes them. Some of these urchins had, with towering ambition, reached the roof, and over-topped even the heroic KEMBLE. Their exertions did not cease here until they had made an aperture in the roof, and proudly looked down on gods and men below. Unfortunately KEMBLE'S coat obstructed their view. A mischievous elf, finding it within reach, drew the sleeve through the hole he and his companions had made, and as the remainder would not follow, he took his pen-knife and cut it off. The mutilated coat fell in, the arm was carried away, when these imps had satisfied their love of fun and mischief. KEMBLE, after the labours of the evening, putting his coat on, found the lamentable deficiency, and fearing the laugh of his companions, got home unseen; but what was to be done in the morning? He had no other coat: he must go to rehearsal. Summoning his philosophy to his aid, he assumed that look of *sang-froid*, of which he is so eminently capable, and with one sleeved, and one sleeveless arm, he coolly walked through the town to the theatre, followed by a mob of boys, who huzza'd him to the scenes of his greatness. Here he was received with a shout of laughter by the company, which he bore with the most stoical indifference. Mrs. —, a London star, on whom this company of Thespians were attending, and who had marked KEMBLE'S superiority of talents, questioned him as to the

meaning of his appearance. John, with great *naïveté*, told his misfortune.

"But why not put on another coat this morning?"

"Another," says John, "whose would it be? I have no other."

The lady laughed, and had the address to prevail upon the hero, without offending his delicacy, to accept a new coat of her ordering, and was assiduous ever after in commending his merit.*

After undergoing a variety of mortifying circumstances, and long enduring all the contumely and neglect, and

"the spurns

Which patient merit of the unworthy takes ;"

we find Mr. KEMBLE at Worcester, where he had the misfortune to incur a debt to a taylor, for which he was arrested. He was released from this disagreeable state of bondage by Mrs. SIDDONS, and introduced by that lady to Mr. YOUNGER, from which time he began to rise gradually in respectability and estimation.

In 1778, he paid an introductory visit to the inhabitants of Hull, where he selected the part of *Macbeth* to commence his campaign; and in the same year brought on the stage his tragedy of "*Belisarius*." It was never printed. In the north of England he performed for some time, under the management of the eccentric but worthy Mr. TATE WILKINSON, and composed several dramatic trifles, which were acted at York; one of these was an alteration of MASSINGER's comedy of "*A New Way to pay Old Debts*;" and another was the "*Comedy of Errors*," metamorphosed into a piece called "*Oh! its impossible*." They attracted a temporary notice; but their names are now all

* *Danlap's Life of Cook.*

that is generally known of them. He was also fortunate in *getting-up* a musical olio, consisting of several of the most admired odes of MASON, GRAY, and COLLINS; the tales of LE FEVRE and MARIA, from STERNE, with other pieces in prose and verse. Entertainments of this description have since become common to an extreme; but, like most other imitations, they are infinitely inferior to their original.

Young KEMBLE also published a volume of poems, under the title of *Fugitive Pieces*, which are spoken of by those who have had an opportunity of perusing them, as displaying marks of a superior mind. He was himself, however, so dissatisfied with the contents, on seeing them in print, that he destroyed the whole of the copies which remained in his possession, and exerted himself to stop the circulation of such as had been distributed. A copy of these early effusions were sold a few years since for £3. 5s.*

KEMBLE stood high in favour with Mr. WILKINSON, who frequently placed him in parts generally occupied by other performers as a matter of exclusive right. Mr. WILKINSON relates that he had given a servant permission to go and see "Hamlet," but on his remaining at home, questioned him, and received for answer, he would not go to the theatre because Mr. KEMBLE played *Hamlet*, and it was "Mr. CUMMIN's part." The servant appears to have had a high notion of prerogative.

When TATE WILKINSON became manager of the Edinburgh theatre he was accompanied by KEMBLE, who had the satisfaction of being well received in that capital, and of gaining a considerable accession to his literary fame by delivering a LECTURE ON

* Biographica Dramatica.

ORATORY. He was now rapidly emerging into celebrity. He left Mr. TATE WILKINSON in 1781, being engaged by Mr. DALY, and made his first appearance in Dublin, as *Hamlet*, a character in which he has always experienced distinguished applause. It being the intention of the manager to exhibit JEPHSON'S tragedy of "The Count of Narbonne," the author was of opinion that Mr. DALY had no performer who could personate the *Count* with proportionate effect, but on seeing KEMBLE in the part, he acknowledged that Mr. FARREN, its representative in London, was inferior to him.

No man is less adapted physically or morally for comedy than Mr. KEMBLE; yet notwithstanding his incapacity, choice or necessity induced him occasionally to take that line. Performing *Sir George Touchwood*, in the first representation of the "*Belle's Stratagem*" in Dublin, the manager, who played *Doricourt*, thought that Mr. KEMBLE did not display sufficient *spirit* in his part, and told him so behind the scenes; and that he must exert himself more, and take pattern from him. This imperious conduct did not suit our hero's temper at all; he warmly resented it, immediately changed his dress, and told Mr. DALY he might get some one else to finish the part, nor would he resume it till the manager had asked his pardon. But though it was not in Mr. KEMBLE'S nature to excite risibility, few men were more easily moved to laughter. An incident, though trifling, will serve to display this propensity to which he was subject in an amusing light. One evening, during his performance of *Mark Antony* in "*All for Love*," an old gentleman, who unluckily happened to be hard of hearing, leaned over the front of an upper box in which he sat, holding a listening trumpet to his ear.—There was nothing particularly *comic* in this appearance, but it had such an effect on Mr. KEMBLE,

that after striving to smother his risible emotions, which were at first considered a display of agitation arising from the pathos of the scene, to the astonishment of the audience, he indulged a loud and immoderate laugh, nor could he for some minutes remould his features to their serious expression.

The life of almost every actor supplies scenes calculated to excite our pity, commiseration, and disgust,—Poverty and distress in a variety of shapes,—talent, employing in lonely study the midnight hour, and long struggling with the gigantic and repelling arm of adversity,—Vice and dissipation with their trains of woeful contingencies, are too frequently the concomitants to those allurements which kindle ambition in the votaries of theatrical renown. And after all, happy is the man who, by the devotion of one half of his life to indigence and obscurity, wandering with associates as wretched as himself from barn to barn, and hedge to hedge, can derive a decent reputation and emolument during the other half. Not, therefore, to dwell longer on that period of Mr. KEMBLE's existence, when he was forced to share the difficulties and privations so common to the brethren of his profession, it will be more agreeable to arrive at once at that æra so eagerly looked forward to by every anxious and aspiring son and daughter of Thespis, and which generally forms the most important epoch in the career of those who pass the ordeal—that of an introduction to a London audience. This is the touchstone which decides the fortunes of theatrical heroes and heroines.

Mrs. SIDDONS being at this time in the meridian of her success, and reports of her brother's abilities having reached London, it was determined to give him an engagement at one of the principal theatres of the metropolis. Indeed, so desirous were the respective managers to obtain him, that Mr. Harris

of Covent Garden Theatre, fearing the rival house, which had already made overtures would succeed, eagerly dispatched a messenger with proposals, and power to conclude the business, and by this haste facilitated his own disappointment. The person sent mistook the brothers, and engaged STEPHEN instead of JOHN, the latter therefore signed articles with the managers of Drury.

It was on the 30th of September, 1783, he made his first bow in a London theatre as *Hamlet*, and sustained the deportment of the Danish Prince in such a manner as to justify the expectations which had been formed of his merits. He received the most flattering applause. Dramatic reviewing was not till within these few years conducted on a principle so useful and extensive as at present. It was sufficient to praise or condemn in the aggregate. Thus we may in vain look for some record, some traces of the peculiar beauties, the exquisite touches, and sudden transitions, the light and shade, and infinite variations which must have so eminently marked the performances of BOOTH, BETTERTON, GARRICK, and HENDERSON. Memory alone treasured up the distinguished features of theatrical excellence, without attempting to delineate or convey to posterity their form. A mere criticism or review, it is true, cannot effect so much as might be wished; but it can, and does perform a great deal towards enabling future generations to figure to the mind those admirable traits of conception and execution which delight the present. We are therefore precluded from taking a survey, as we could wish, of Mr. KEMBLE's personation of this most arduous character on that occasion, and comparing it with his more matured representations; but it has always been esteemed one of the most chaste and correct performances the stage could ever boast. We shall recur to this subject when we come to speak sepa-

rately of Mr. KEMBLE's qualifications for an actor.

Mr. HENDERSON was still on the stage when Mr. KEMBLE first graced the London boards with his presence; and though the latter was entitled to, and received distinguished applause, he was not considered equal to his justly esteemed rival. The consideration, however, with which he was now regarded, must have been highly pleasing to his mind: his praises formed the general topic of conversation; and the provincial managers evinced an eagerness to engage him during the summer recess. From motives of a laudable nature, independently of those which consulted his interest, he gave the preference to his friend Mr. YOUNGER, of Liverpool. The following is a copy of the articles he signed on that occasion:—

MEMORANDUM.

It is agreed this day of 1784, between JOSEPH YOUNGER, Esq. Manager of the Theatre Royal Liverpool, on behalf of himself and his partner, GEORGE MATTOCKS, Esq. and JOHN KEMBLE, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London, as follows:—

“The said JOHN KEMBLE, for and in consideration of the covenants and agreements hereinafter mentioned, on the part of the said JOSEPH YOUNGER and GEORGE MATTOCKS, to be paid, kept, and performed,—agrees during the course of the summer season, at the said Theatre Royal Liverpool, to study, rehearse, and perform all and every such character or characters as shall be allotted to him by the said JOSEPH YOUNGER or GEORGE MATTOCKS, in all plays, operas, farces, and pantomimes, to the utmost of his abilities. In consideration whereof, the said JOSEPH YOUNGER and GEORGE MATTOCKS, hereby agree and bind themselves, their

heirs, executors, and assignees, to pay or cause to be paid to the said JOHN KEMBLE the sum of ten shillings for each and every night on which there shall be a play, opera, or entertainment in the said theatre during the said summer season; the same to be paid on the Saturday in each acting week; and also that he shall have the whole of the produce of some one night in the said acting season to be appointed as his benefit, paying for the same the sum of thirty-five pounds to the said JOSEPH YOUNGER and GEORGE MATTOCKS, and any charge that may be incurred by his fixing on a play that may require the assistance of supernumeraries or other persons not constantly in pay at the theatre, any additional expense in scenery, music, writing, &c. &c.

“In witness whereof, the parties hereto have set their hand the day and year first above written.”

Our readers will be surprized at so great an actor as JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE receiving only *ten shillings* per night, after he had successfully stood the test of a London verdict. But it was not the custom at that time to remunerate performers so munificently as at present; and our hero was not like his sister, a star of the first magnitude, the splendour of whose radiance at once burst upon the world, enforcing an universal tribute of admiration and astonishment.

On the decease of Mr. HENDERSON, Nov. 3, 1785, an actor and gentleman of distinguished attainments, and whose memory will long be respected, KEMBLE became the acknowledged first male tragedian of the age. Throughout a variety of characters which he successively sustained, he advanced both in excellence and public estimation. The attention which he bestowed on the duties of his profession was incessant, and he had the pleasure of finding his efforts duly encouraged and re-

warded by the crowds which nightly flocked to witness his performance.

In 1786, he produced a farce called the "Project," which had been previously acted in 1779, at York, under the name, we believe, of the Female Officer. It was never printed.

In the year 1787, Mr. KEMBLE entered into a contract with Hymen, by marrying a lady of exemplary conduct, the widow of the late Mr. BRERETON, and daughter of the late Mr. HOPKINS, formerly prompter of Drury Lane Theatre. The circumstances which produced this match were of so novel a kind as to be entitled to particular description.

Mr. KEMBLE, though in his person exceedingly graceful and dignified, is by no means gifted with those exterior qualifications of winning address and captivating elegance which are frequently supposed necessary to induce the female heart to surrender. Nevertheless, it seems a young lady of high birth and connexions, the daughter of a deceased nobleman, once a minister of state, conceived a lurking attachment in favour of our hero. His Lordship soon discovered the state of his daughter's affections, and immediately sent to request an interview with the object to which they pointed. In the course of the conference which ensued, his Lordship with an air of frankness which hid the *finesse* beneath, observed that to prosecute the enterprise on the part of the gentleman would be a fruitless and vain attempt,—that proper and effectual means of precaution would be adopted to render the completion of the project abortive; and finally, that even in an extreme case no pecuniary advantages would accrue. Yet as he wished to keep his mind at ease, and not to be under the necessity of standing centinel over his daughter, he was willing to make a proposal, by acceding to which the gentle-

man would at once consult his own interest and his Lordship's peace. His Lordship then proceeded to state, that provided the gentleman would quiet his paternal apprehensions, by taking to himself a wife, he would be content to pay him down the sum of £4000 within a certain given time after the celebration of the nuptials. With respect to the person of his future bride, he left the gentleman (with the exception of *one* lady) to his own option and unbiassed choice; only stipulating, that the match should take place within a fortnight at the farthest.

The subject matter of this conversation was of too weighty and momentous a nature to be neglected. Mr. KEMBLE agreed to comply with his Lordship's wishes, and his union with Mrs. BRERETON was speedily settled.

The wedding-day arrived. Mr. BANNISTER, jun. acted the part of father, and in that capacity consigned the lady to the arms of the gratified bridegroom: so far, so well. But after the parties had quitted the church, Mr. KEMBLE suddenly absented himself from their society. Some hours elapsed but he did not return; messengers were dispatched in various directions, but no tidings could be heard of him; it was feared he had met with some accident. This, however, fortunately proved not to be the case; he was at last discovered at a very late hour in his study, which had been, till then, unaccountably forgotten in the search, so completely absorbed in meditation as to have entirely lost all recollection of the interesting event in which he had been engaged in the morning.

In due course of time, Mr. KEMBLE waited on his Lordship to claim the performance of his promise. His Lordship received him with great politeness, and congratulated him on his nuptials; but when he proceeded to remind his Lordship of the occasion of his visit relative to the expected

dowry, he was rebutted in a strain of the most galling and severe irony,—a talent in which his Lordship was not deficient. He was asked what interest his Lordship could have in his domestic arrangements? On what plea he expected to be paid £4000 for marrying a pretty girl?—Was he in earnest, or was he acting? His Lordship was fully sensible of, and duly admired his great theatrical talents; but there was no need for him to assume the actor in the present instance; his Lordship would take an early opportunity of witnessing his excellent performance on the public stage; meanwhile he begged leave to assure him of the high sense he entertained of his professional merit, and with these remarks his Lordship very politely withdrew.

The above mentioned incidents are sufficiently whimsical. His Lordship's conduct was certainly dishonourable, not to say base; he however entrapped Mr. KEMBLE into the possession of a good wife, a blessing for which the latter gentleman cannot be too thankful.

An office of great trust and responsibility was conferred on him, by his appointment to the situation of stage-manager, on the secession of Mr. KING in 1788. The duties to which a theatrical manager must attend, may perhaps be ranked among the most arduous, embarrassing, and tiresome, that fall to the lot of man. Every one who is in the least aware of the obstacles presented to a favourite plan by the intervention of conflicting interests, constant bickerings, feuds, and discontents, and ever-varying humours and caprice, will readily form an idea of the condition of a man who is every moment exposed to these and a thousand other thwartings, and causes of vexation. It is not therefore to be wondered, if Mr KEMBLE failed in his endeavours to give entire satisfaction in his new government—if some obloquy and disapprobation were the result of

his attempts to please. But let it be recorded of him to his praise, that through his indefatigable exertions, the dramas of our glorious SHAKESPEARE were represented with more classic propriety and attention to stage *minutiae*, than they had ever been before at any period in the annals of the theatre. The inconsistent and ridiculous practice of dressing persons of antiquity in modern costume, as GARRICK used to play *Macbeth* in a fashionable laced suit, and dress-sword, and as BOOTH formerly acted *Cato* in full court-apparel, was exploded under the superintendence of KEMBLE. Every character henceforward assumed its proper habit; and taste and judgment were no longer offended by the most incongruous absurdities, and the violation of all historical authority.

During the interval between 1788 and 1795, there does not appear any incidents or events calculated to excite interest, connected with the history of Mr. KEMBLE. His powers as an actor, being then in their full splendour, seldom failed of giving the utmost satisfaction to the audience; and by a needful and prudent attention to maxims of frugality, he was speedily realizing a truly respectable competency. In the course of the above-mentioned period, he produced several dramatic pieces, a list of which, in the order they appeared, will be subjoined at the end of this work.

It may, however, not be amiss to introduce in this place a couple of letters, (though the circumstance which occasioned their publication occurred at a subsequent date,) illustrative of his anxiety to be considered a comic as well as tragic actor, and of his conduct as manager, under auspices more or less blended with his personal interest. It is necessary to premise, that on Mrs. WELLS, afterwards SUMBEL, retiring from the stage, the other London managers complimented her with admis-

sions to their respective theatres; but Mr. KEMBLE, then manager and part proprietor of the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, did not think proper to follow their example. The lady was consequently offended, and judging he was actuated by motives of individual gain, rather than by principles of justice to his partners, gave vent to her indignation by publishing the two letters which we shall here insert.

“ Dear Sir, *Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.*

“ I HAVE taken the liberty to put Mr. and Mrs. SAMUEL, and Mr. BONNER on the free-list, and hope you will have the goodness to give orders to your people to speak favourably of the *Charles*,* as more depends on that than you can possibly be aware of.

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ your very humble servant,

“ J. P. KEMBLE.”

“ *E. Topham, Esq.*

Weymouth Street, Portland Place.”

Mrs. WELLS having written to Mr. TOPHAM on the same subject as the above, received the following in return.

“ Dear Pud, *Cowslip Hall, Suffolk.*

“ I RECEIVED your letter, where you mention KEMBLE's wish to be puffed in *Charles*. You may inform Mr. ESTE† from me, I will not sacrifice the credit of my paper for all the admissions in Europe, to puff either the SIDMONS's or the KEMBLE's in comedy.

“ Yours, as ever,

“ *Mrs. Wells.*”

“ *E. TOPHAM.*”

* *Charles*, in the “*School for Scandal*,” which Mr. KEMBLE had the presumption to attempt to perform.—
(*Mrs. Wells.*)

† The Editor of the “*World*” at that time, and the enthusiastic supporter of Mr. KEMBLE.

To the foregoing she adds the following anecdote, relating to her grievance, and "John's" obstinacy. "One day as JOHN KEMBLE and I were quarrelling in King Street, Covent Garden, about the freedom of the theatre, Mr. KELLY rode up and requested to be permitted to interpose between us." "Have I not power to reconcile you both?" Mr. KEMBLE immediately turned round and replied, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast!" But I instantly exclaimed, "JOHN, yours is too far gone, for it is beyond the power of music!"

We shall here just allude to an example of the disgraceful and unjustifiable effects caused by the unrestrained impulse of momentary passion. Having no wish to revive unpleasant feelings, we shall but slightly touch on the particulars of the case; it being our duty to detail things as they were, and things as they are, we cannot, consistently with the obligation imposed on us, evade the subject altogether. From these remarks our readers will anticipate; that we refer to Mr. KEMBLE's unwarrantable attempt on the honour of an unprotected female.

While Miss DE CAMP was dressing or undressing herself at the theatre, Mr. KEMBLE, who we suppose had

"Put an enemy into his mouth to steal
Away his brains."

forced open the door of her apartment, and proceeded to take some very abrupt liberties with her person. But the lady, when she had a little recovered from her surprise at such an unexpected outrage, firmly resisted his assaults till more effectual assistance could be procured to her aid. When Mr. KEMBLE returned to his senses he made the *amende honorable*, by inserting in the newspapers the following manly apology:—

"I, JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, do adopt this method of publicly apologizing to Miss DE CAMP, for the very improper and unjustifiable behaviour I was lately guilty of towards her, which I do further declare her conduct and character had in no instance authorized; but, on the contrary, I do know and believe both to be irreproachable."

"January 27, 1795."

Miss DE CAMP a few years afterwards became Mrs. C. KEMBLE, by marriage with our hero's brother; and thus amicably terminated an affair which more seriously affected Mr. KEMBLE's honour than any other part of his conduct that we are acquainted with through life.

Events that have once obtained notoriety, though probably hurtful to the feelings of individuals, necessarily become materials for history or biography; they are employed to elucidate the characters of times and persons; and it is the duty of a writer in either of these departments to embody the most prominent and useful facts in their genuine colours—else wherefore is the use of his labours? The causes which led to the rupture between Mr. KEMBLE and Mr. COLMAN, are too important to be omitted in the biography of either of those gentlemen; however, therefore, we might wish to avoid exciting painful recollections, the nature of our task is such as to preclude us from indulging our feelings on all particulars. It is the business of the biographer to

"extenuate nought,
Nor set down aught in malice."

And though we are well aware that a certain degree of delicacy ought to be observed in speaking of living characters, we think it no less desirable that truth should be spoken of the living than of the dead. The maxim of the ancients, "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," is exploded.

Having deemed it right to say thus much, with a view of guarding ourselves from being suspected of partiality or detraction, it is time to return to our narrative.

In the year 1796, shortly after Mr. KEMBLE had departed to fulfil an engagement in Ireland, a severe, and in many respects unmanly, attack was made on his reputation, by the celebrated GEORGE COLMAN THE YOUNGER.

It is well known that when the play of the "Iron Chest" was first acted at Drury Lane it failed, and that Mr. COLMAN, the author, printed in the first editions a most vituperative essay against our hero, in his double capacity of manager and performer; ascribing to that gentleman solely the causes of the unsuccessfulness of the piece. But it should be remembered, that Mr. COLMAN's preface was written under the impulsion of feelings, rendered poignantly acute by the loss of 2000 guineas (a sum we believe unprecedented in such transactions) which he was to have received had the play succeeded,—it should therefore be received with caution. That Mr. KEMBLE's behaviour throughout the business was not such as to exculpate him entirely from the charges urged against him must be admitted; but that he was so grossly culpable, as Mr. COLMAN attempted to prove, may be unequivocally denied.

In order that a clearer understanding may be formed of the grounds on which the quarrel between these gentlemen originated, we will subjoin a brief analysis of this so celebrated preface; the wit and satire of which will ensure it admiration, even from those who denounce its virulence and dislike its author. The reader will thereby be better enabled to judge what share of blame should be apportioned to Mr. KEMBLE for his conduct in the affair.

Mr. COLMAN states that he was engaged by the

managers of Drury Lane Theatre to write a play for them, which he executed accordingly. It was put in rehearsal under the superintendence of the prompter, as the stage-manager, Mr. KEMBLE, was confined to his apartment by illness. But two or three days before the first public representation, Mr. KEMBLE came to the theatre and declared the piece ready for performance. It was therefore immediately announced. Intelligence of the "mighty fiat" was brought to Mr. COLMAN, who had been also prevented by sickness from witnessing the rehearsal. He feared that under such a combination of ill omens, the play was not in a state of sufficient preparation to meet the public eye, but with "doubt and trembling" submitted to the manager's decision. About *three hours only* before the curtain was to be drawn up to an expecting audience, he received a note from the prompter, written by the manager's order, requesting permission to transpose two of the most material scenes, on account of some difficulty which had occurred in adjusting the machinery. With this novel request Mr. COLMAN did not think proper to comply; but, notwithstanding his bodily weakness, repaired to the theatre, where he saw Mr. KEMBLE in his dressing-room *swallowing opium pills*. This circumstance is dwelt on to corroborate the other parts of the statement. He describes Mr. KEMBLE as being very unfit, from the state of his health, to do justice to the character of *Sir Edward Mortimer*, which he was to perform; and requested him, at the end of the first act, to order an apology to be made for his illness, "lest the uninformed, or malicious, might attribute the ponderosity of the performer to the heaviness of the author." Mr. KEMBLE, however, would not suffer an apology to be made, alledging, as a reason, that it ought to have been made (if at all) before the performance began;

that he had coughed repeatedly during the first act, and to tell the audience what they knew already, would only make him *look like a fool*.

Mr. KEMBLE is described as looking as stiff and formal, as one of King Charles the First's portraits, —had a picture of that monarch walked from its frame upon the stage it could not have looked better; but Mr. COLMAN thinks also, in justice to the picture, it could scarcely have acted worse.

The disapprobation of the audience, evinced before the end of the first act, most alarmingly increased during the succeeding ones. When at its height, Mr. KEMBLE, to appease the grumbling multitude, stepped forward, and begged they would suspend their judgment of the piece, as his illness incapacitated him from giving full effect to the principal character. This had some effect; but the play "dragg'd its slow length along," in a manner that would have been sufficient to dispel the hopes of any but a veteran in dramatic literature.

Mr. COLMAN then insinuates that this apology, for which he at first felt grateful, was nothing but an artifice calculated to preserve appearances, intended as a salvo for the performer, and not to benefit the author.

He then enquires how he stands indebted to Mr. KEMBLE, and reduces the amount of his statement to the following items:—

For his illness	Compassion.
For his conduct under it, . . .	Censure.
For his refusing to make an apology,	A smile.
For his making an apology, . . .	A sneer.
For his mismanagement, . . .	A groan.
For his acting,	A hiss.

Such is the sum total of Mr. COLMAN's charges,

divested of the wit and ornament with which they are embellished. A few remarks on them will not be out of place. Mr. COLMAN confesses that he sent the play to the theatre, piece-meal, as fast as the sheets came from under his pen. With this fact before us, and mindful that the known habits of that gentleman have never been over-favourable to a system of economy, it certainly would not be extravagant to suppose that 2000*l.* might be some inducement for being guilty of a little haste himself. Why did he send the play to the theatre in scraps? Was it by the manager's wish? No, he would have said so if it had. Where then was the necessity for such haste? This question can be answered only by Mr. COLMAN himself. Mr. KEMBLE cannot be blamed for his absence, as that was owing to illness; the author could not attend the rehearsals from the same cause, though even he could attend the first public representation; and, with the further disadvantage of giving the respective parts to the performers in an incomplete state, it cannot be surprising that a failure was the result, even without imputing misconduct any where. It is likely that a production so hastily composed was not altogether free from faults, and those of such a sort as to render its fate doubtful. Indeed, Miss FARREN was so disgusted with her part that she refused to perform it after the first night; and on the next representation it was read by Mrs. POWELL.

Upon the whole Mr. KEMBLE, though his conduct does not exempt him from partial animadversion, cannot be justly accused of a more heinous offence than *apparent indifference*, the result, probably, of nervous debility. So far from having a design to injure Mr. COLMAN, he appears to have consulted that gentleman's wishes in preference to his own better judgment, in prematurely causing

the play to be acted. But be this as it may, that man is to be pitied who can conscientiously approve the acrimonious libel and unmerited censure with which Mr. KEMBLE was assailed.

Soon after our hero's return from his Irish tour, a new edition of the "Iron Chest" appeared, in which the original preface was omitted. It was hinted in the "Monthly Mirror," at the time that this new impression was occasioned by some apprehensions on the part of Mr. C——, of personal castigation, though we have heard a different story.*

In 1796, Mr. KEMBLE resigned the direction of the stage-business; but shortly afterwards resumed it.

Mr. KEMBLE continued performing a variety of the finest characters of the drama, in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and other principal towns in the kingdom, with increasing admiration, and without a competitor. But he was now approach-

* A reconciliation ultimately took place, for which, it is said, the gentlemen were mutually indebted, at least in part, to accident. Meeting one day in the street, in such a way that they could not avoid a personal recognition, KEMBLE accosted COLMAN thus,—“Ha, COLMAN! my dear fellow, can't we make up this little difference between us? come, come, let us have a bottle together.” The name of a bottle conveyed a certain magical potency with it to the nerves of Mr. COLMAN, which that gentleman was seldom known to withstand; so to the tavern they immediately adjourned. Libations were devoutly quaffed to the jolly god; mutual good humour prevailed, and before they separated, Mr. COLMAN agreed to publish a new edition without the preface. Mr. KEMBLE, thereupon, exerted himself to purchase all the obnoxious copies without loss of time; and indeed he was so successful, that their price was speedily enhanced from one to two guineas each; at the present time a copy is but rarely to be met with.

ing that period when a powerful rival entered the lists, and disputed with him the palm of victory. We, of course, allude to the late GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE, a man whose mind was formed in one of Nature's noblest moulds; his understanding was capacious, his judgment clear, his conceptions vigorous, and his memory retentive; but these fine qualities, which constitute the basis of all that is great in intellect and sublime in soul, this unfortunate man gradually impaired and destroyed by early and continued habits of dissipation. But, still, while admiration and pity have a tear to shed, let it flow to his memory! Peace to his manes! his grave is beyond the Atlantic! he rests in the land of Washington!

It may not be amiss to introduce this extraordinary character to the reader by an anecdote from his Life, written by WILLIAM DUNLAP, Esq.

While Mr. COOKE was sustaining his principal characters on the Dublin stage, prior to his engagement in London, Mr. KEMBLE paid a visit to the Irish capital. One evening during the performance of the "Count of Narbonne," in which the former gentleman played *Austin* to the latter's *Count*, the following dialogue, which may be regarded as characteristic of each, took place behind the scenes:—

Mr. COOKE, you distressed me exceedingly in my last scene—I could scarcely get on—you did not give me the cue more than once; you were very imperfect."

"Sir, I was perfect."

"Excuse me, Sir, you were not."

"By—— I was, Sir!"

"You were not, Sir!"

"I'll tell you what, I'll not have your faults fathered upon me! and, d—n me, Black Jack, if

I don't make you tremble in your pumps one of these days yet!"

The threat held out in the last reply was nearer the point of accomplishment, than perhaps either of the parties imagined at the time it was uttered. On the 31st of October, 1809, Mr. COOKE, in the words of his biographer, "established his fame as an actor, by the performance of the arduous, and varied, and highly wrought character of "Richard the Third." "Never," COOKE himself says, "was a reception more flattering; nor ever did I receive more encouraging, indulgent, and warm approbation, than on that night, both through the play and at the conclusion. Mr. KEMBLE did me the honour of making one of the audience."

Mr. COOKE was, indeed, a man whose powers were sufficient to shake Mr. KEMBLE's throne; and our hero probably felt, for a moment, as if his high fame were vanishing like a dream, and the sceptre he had so long wielded alone broken in his hand—separated in twain.

Mr. COOKE's face and figure were less elegant and noble than Mr. KEMBLE's; but he could occasionally be more striking and effective; his features were more flexible, and subject to command; his voice was infinitely better, and he was extremely skilful in modulating it to the utmost advantage. In parts such as *Richard*, *Iago*, and *Shylock*, Mr. KEMBLE could not hope to cope with him; and accordingly, after a considerable struggle, the crook-backed tyrant was finally resigned to Mr. COOKE. His physiognomy was admirably adapted to express all the fierce and guilty workings of the soul, the projects of meditated villainy, the gloomy desperation of jealousy, and the demoniac joy of vengeful cruelty. His eyes were dark and fiery, at times darting forth the most ter-

rible lightning. In his acting there was much less appearance of study than in Mr. KEMBLE'S.—Such was the man with whom our hero had now to contend.

He had been in the metropolis nearly twenty years, building himself a reputation which appeared not unlikely to crumble to pieces before the menacing progress of this invader. The next character wrested from him was *Shylock*, in the “Merchant of Venice,” Mr. COOKE having been equally successful in that as in *Richard*. This was succeeded by *Iago*; but as Mr. KEMBLE had not then attempted to delineate the subtle Ancient, he had no cause to fear COOKE'S success in this instance. But when the latter performed *Macbeth*, it was Mr. KEMBLE'S turn to triumph; here he evidently rose, by comparison, to his former elevation; and COOKE, for the first time in the capital, sunk beneath the splendour of his previous efforts. In the words of a celebrated critic,* “his *Macbeth*, who ought to be at least a majestic villain, exhibits nothing but a desperate craftiness.”

Mr. KEMBLE, however, in abandoning some characters to his great competitor, lost little, if any, of his own attraction. In *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Stranger*, *Penruddock*, &c. he continued unrivalled. COOKE repeated the *Stranger* but once, and left it to be reckoned among our hero's finest personations.

Happy would it have been for COOKE if intemperance had not clouded his faculties; but scarcely had he well fixed himself in public opinion, ere his character began to be known; in nearly the same moment that witnessed his extraordinary elevation as an actor, the shameful excesses to which he was addicted, debased him to the lowest level as a man.

* Mr. LEIGH HUNT.

The shock his first appearance had given Mr. KEMBLE's popularity, that gentleman had speedy opportunities of retrieving; and he did not neglect to avail himself of them. In the end, Mr. KEMBLE maintained his pre-eminence, and COOKE fell a victim to his depraved courses.

Previous to the season of 1801, Mr. KEMBLE intimated his intention of again resigning his situation as acting-manager, unless he should be invested with more extensive powers than heretofore, which were promised him. His department in this capacity seems to have been to him a source of more than ordinary trouble; the concerns of the theatre having been long in a state approaching to bankruptcy, contentions between the performers, proprietors, rent-holders, and share-holders, increased to the most irreconcilable extent. It was at length found necessary to resort to legal measures, to bring the disputes to a close, and disentangle the several interests. After an intricate and patient investigation, the Lord Chancellor recommended that the house should be kept open; and as the payment of the performers' salaries was a primary consideration, it being from their exertions only any beneficial results could be expected, that they should be attended to in the first instance. By his lordship's further interference, an amicable adjustment was effected; and Mr. KEMBLE, with others who had seceded, resumed their respective stations.

From this time there does not appear any thing worthy of record till the close of the season, June 24, 1802, when Mr. KEMBLE delivered the usual address, and retired, never again to gratify an audience within the walls of Drury Lane Theatre.

An intermission of hostilities between France and England having taken place, Mr. KEMBLE left Lon-

don, on Friday the 2d of July, for a tour to the Continent. He continued abroad for several months, visiting the principal cities of Spain and France. In Paris he experienced the most flattering reception; the celebrated French actor TALMA paid him particular attention, and introduced him to the first circles of rank and fashion, and the literati. The following account of him is extracted from a French paper; it will serve to evince the homage that distinguished talents are sure to receive in all countries.—“ Mr. KEMBLE, the celebrated actor of London, whose arrival at Paris has been announced by all the papers, is a fine figure, appears to be from 36 to 40 years of age, his hair dark, and the marked character of his features gives him a physiognomy truly tragic:—he understands and speaks perfectly well the French language, but in company he appears to be thoughtful and incommunicative. His manners, however, are very distinguished, and he has in his looks, when he is spoken to, an expression of courtesy, that affords us the best idea of his education; he is said to be well informed, and a particularly good grammarian, which must distinguish him from other *English actors, who are more attentive to attitude than to diction.* The Comedie Française has received him with all the respect due to the Le Kaim of England; they have already given him a superb dinner, and mean to invite him to a still more brilliant *souper.* TALMA to whom he had letters of recommendation, does the honours of Paris; they visit together our finest works, and appear to be already united by the most friendly ties. KEMBLE is frank enough to avow that our mode of theatrical declamation does not suit him, and that he thinks it too remote from nature; but he confesses that some of our actors have great talents. Before his departure they talk of playing *Macbeth, Hamlet, and Romeo*

and Juliet. This truly French gallantry will have the double advantage of doing honour to a whole people, in the person of their most celebrated tragedian, and of drawing great houses."

He returned from the Continent about the month of March 1803. During his absence he had the misfortune to lose his father. Mr. ROGER KEMBLE died December 6, 1802, in the 82d year of his age; after living to experience the gratification of seeing his children, particularly our hero and Mrs. SIDDONS, arrive at a noble height of fame and fortune, by the fair exertion of talent and industry. He was a man more celebrated as a manager than as an actor, though in the latter capacity, it is said, he was a respectable acquisition to provincial theatres.

Mr. KEMBLE, on his return to England, purchased a sixth share in the property of the Theatre Royal Covent-Garden, for which he paid the sum of £24,000. This arrangement, of course, induced him to quit Drury-Lane, and add the whole weight of his talents to the already powerful advantages of the rival house, with which his personal interest was now so immediately connected. The same cause produced also the desertion of Mrs. SIDDONS, and her consequent engagement at Covent-Garden, while poor Drury suffered, by the secession of these two great performers, a shock from which, in comparison with its rival, its decline for some years may be dated. It did not recover itself till the managers discovered the philosopher's stone, and an irresistible magnet of attraction in the person of Mr. KEAN. At the present time its superiority is evident, and redounds infinitely to the credit of the gentlemen by whom its affairs are regulated.

Mr. KEMBLE succeeded that admirable comedian and estimable man, the late Mr. LEWIS, as stage-

manager, and made his first appearance, in the early part of the season, as *Hamlet*. COOKE, KEMBLE, and Mrs. SIDDONS, at this time, frequently appeared together, thus forming a combination of talent, perhaps never equalled, certainly never surpassed in the theatrical world.

Mr. KEMBLE, on one occasion, honourably evinced the high sense in which he held his rival's powers, by performing the part of *Richmond* to COOKE's *Gloster*; an instance of condescension which it would be desirable to see oftener repeated among performers. One man cannot be superior in every thing; and if, by placing himself, at times, in a subordinate rank, he can improve general excellence, or heighten individual enjoyment, he should not be too proud to be thus laudably engaged. Genius may sometimes descend from its elevated sphere, and be usefully employed in an inferior station, without loss of dignity, or diminution of lustre.

Another circumstance, however, of a less agreeable nature, ought also, for the sake of impartiality, to be recorded. Stimulated by a pettiness of ambition, unworthy of an exalted mind, he once attempted the character of *Norval* in the tragedy of "Douglas." This part was in the possession of Mr. MURRAY, a man of modest unassuming genius, who afforded, as its representative, general satisfaction. As KEMBLE could have been incited to this effort by no reasonable motive, nor could have derived any advantage from being successful—but as *his* success might have tended to lower a deserving man in public esteem, the result was such as might have been wished—a complete failure. This trivial incident is scarcely entitled to be mentioned, but that trifles are important in biography.

About this period the celebrated *young Roscius*, the wonder of his day! was acquiring an uncommon

share of applause in various provincial theatres; he consequently soon became an object of general celebrity, having previously caused his fame to spread over Ireland, where he made his *debut*, and whence he came to this country.

The following account of him from the "*Biographia Britannica*" is so just, explicit and concise, that no apology is necessary for introducing it in this place.

"The first of December of this year (1804), will form a kind of era in the history of the British stage, as having brought before a London audience, a juvenile actor, of very extraordinary acquirements, at Covent Garden Theatre, as *Achmet*, in "*Barbarossa*:" we mean Master WILLIAM HENRY WEST BETTY, who had but just attained his thirteenth year; but had, in his previous provincial course, obtained the imposing appellation of the YOUNG ROSCIUS. The eagerness of the public to see this phenomenon was such, that three theatres might have been filled by the crowd that sought admission this evening, and many very serious accidents happened to various individuals, by reason of the pressure at the different doors. His attraction was such, that he was soon engaged to perform alternately at Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden, at the former of which the bills always announced him as the YOUNG ROSCIUS; at the latter, without any such quackery, as Master BETTY. It were wholly incompatible with the design of this brief sketch, to enter at large on the performances of this young actor, whose company was courted by noble lords, who was kissed and caressed by noble dames, and who had even the honour of being introduced to His Grace the venerable Archbishop of York. Suffice it to say, that he afterwards performed *Richard*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Octavian*, *Romeo*, *Gustavas Vasa*, *Tancred*, *Osmyn*, *Zanga*, and several other characters,

with various degrees of merit, but with astonishing success, receiving 50*l.*, and latterly it is said 100*l.* per night for his performances. Master BETTY took his final leave of the public with a benefit at Drury-Lane, May 17, 1806, after playing *Tancred* and *Captain Flash*."

This young gentleman, however, was not the only theatrical phenomenon of the time, as on the 23d of November 1805, a Miss MUDIE, a child only eight years of age, made her appearance at Covent-Garden theatre, as an actress of first-rate comic parts! She too had found many admirers in the country, her provincial renown having prepared the way for her arrival in the metropolis; but the project was rather too ludicrous to succeed in London; the public were growing tired of such novelties. She chose for her *debut*, *Miss Peggy* in "*The Country Girl*;" in which her infantine appearance being contrasted with her confidence, deportment, accuracy, and intelligence, rendered the performance, so far as it went, really a curiosity.

During the first scene or two, the audience were good-humoured; but before the piece had proceeded far, they testified their contempt and indignation in the most unequivocal manner: shouts of laughter and derision frequently interrupted the actors, and at last not a word could be heard from the stage, such was the marked displeasure of the house. In the midst of the confusion, Miss MUDIE boldly advanced towards the audience, and with a pertness of manner, as well as words, said—

" Ladies and Gentlemen,

" I HAVE done nothing to offend you; and as for those who are sent here to hiss me, *I will be obliged to you to turn them out.*"

Such a specimen of effrontery from a baby-candidate, completely decided the pending issue of

this extraordinary experiment; some were violently exasperated; some were bursting with laughter: but to appease the general anger, Mr. Kemble presently came forward and said—

“ Gentlemen,

“ The great applause with which Miss MUDIE has been received at various provincial theatres, encouraged in her friends a hope, that her merit might be such as to pass the tribunal of your judgment— (*violent hisses.*) Be assured however, Gentlemen, that the proprietors of this theatre by no means wish to press any species of entertainment upon you, which may not meet your most perfect approbation. (*loud applause.*) If therefore you will permit Miss MUDIE—” (*no ! no !*)

Mr. Kemble could not be heard for some time; but at last neatly resumed—

“ The Drama’s laws the Drama’s patrons give.”

“ We hope, however, that as the play has proceeded so far, you will allow Miss MUDIE to finish the character. —(*No ! no ! was vociferated from all parts of the house.*)”

Finding this of no avail, Mr. KEMBLE tried his success with the *female* part of the assemblage, by saying with emphasis—

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,

“ Let me entreat that you will allow Miss MUDIE to finish her part; perhaps when you are informed that after this night Miss MUDIE will be withdrawn from the stage, you will be induced to comply.”

This last appeal seemed to produce the desired effect, but the calm was deceitful; for, upon the next appearance of the child, the uproar was renewed with such violence, that she was compelled to retire. Mr. MURRAY finally announced, that

Miss SEARLE would finish the part ; and thus tranquillity was restored. From this time the public began to return to their former favourites ; to be delighted with the inimitable talents of COOKE, the classic judgment of KEMBLE, and the sublime genius of SIDDONS.

In April 1807, Mr. KEMBLE lost his mother. In the early part of her life, like most of the KEMBLE family, she had been on the stage, but was not an actress of much note. Had she not given birth to a race gifted with superior endowments than was possessed by the parent stock, she would probably have lived and died in the same obscurity which enveloped her progenitors.

In the following year he experienced a severe indisposition, which for some time prevented his appearance in public : his return to the stage upon the 19th of April, on the restoration of his health, as *Octavian* in the "Mountaineers," was greeted with manifestations of the most enthusiastic delight. About this period his salary varied from 50*l.* to 75*l.* per week.

On the 20th of September following, Mr. KEMBLE's theatrical property, in common with that of his colleagues, was totally destroyed by the burning of the theatre.

The season had just began, only four nights having elapsed, on the last of which were represented "Pizarro," and "The Portrait of Cervantes." The performances were over about eleven o'clock. Mr. BRANDON, as housekeeper, examined the interior of the edifice, according to his usual custom, and found every thing apparently safe, before he retired to bed. But about four o'clock in the morning, the building was discovered to be on fire : and, in consequence of considerable delay in procuring water, the flames rapidly extended ; in three hours the whole theatre was destroyed. A part of

the library only, and a few trumpery remnants of scenery, were all that was rescued from destruction. The damage to the proprietors was estimated at a large amount: the property was insured for 58,000*l.* *

Some idea of the immense body of fire, on this melancholy occasion, may be formed from the fact of the heat being sensibly felt at the east end of Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

But the most serious calamity attending this misfortune was, the loss of nearly thirty lives, by the fall of a part of the burning ruins: the persons who thus perished were partly firemen; but many of the unfortunate beings merely came as spectators, and when present, voluntarily assisted to extinguish the devouring element. Among those who were killed was a young man, an apprentice to a respectable butcher in Paternoster-Row, and who was, on the lapse of a short period, to have been married; his death was so deeply lamented by the young woman to whom he was attached, that she was disconsolate a length of time afterwards.

The exact amount of the loss sustained by Mr. KEMBLE is not publicly ascertained: it was indeed insinuated, that in the end he would prove rather a *gainer* than a *loser*. But whatever loss he might have originally apprehended, his own share of misfortune was greatly lightened, by a very handsome and timely loan of 10,000*l.* from His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, whose son, Earl Percy, had been instructed by Mr. KEMBLE in a know-

* Among the losses sustained by individuals, may be mentioned that of Mr. Munden, whose wardrobe was consumed; in the catalogue of articles which it contained, was an extensive collection of wigs, valued at about 100*l.* It may also be noticed, that the scarcity of old play-bills was so great, after the fire, that a set was sold for 30*l.*

ledge of the principles of elocution. This pecuniary transaction appears to have been highly honourable to both parties, the Duke's generosity being unsolicited; and to complete the value and gracefulness of the obligation, His Grace returned Mr. KEMBLE's bond for the money, desiring him to make an illumination with it, on laying the first stone of the new theatre! This munificent conduct was worthy of the illustrious House of Percy.

The proprietors having hired, for a short time, the King's Theatre, the company from Covent-Garden commenced their performances at that house on the 26th of September, when Mr. KEMBLE, in a full court dress, delivered the following oration, which as an *elegant*, a *luminous*, and *grammatical* appeal, is certainly an unique composition.

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,

“ *I know not how to express the very sincere feelings with which I stand before you on the present occasion; and I am equally ignorant how to thank you for the very flattering marks of your favour with which I am now, and have long been honoured. I feel I shall not be able to state, in the collected manner I could wish, the object for which I at present stand before you, and I beg you to impute that failure to any other cause than a want of respect to those whom I have the honour of addressing.*

“ Ladies and Gentlemen,—Immediately after the late destruction of the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden, I trust the proprietors paid that humane attention to its workmen and dependants, to which they were justly entitled; and I also trust they have lost no time in preparing to resume their share of contributions to the amusements of this metropolis, by engaging and fitting up for your reception, the house in which we are now assembled. We have, however, to ask great indulgencies at your hands, and we must be forgiven if we do not represent the productions of our poets, with all those illusions of scenery, habits, and decorations, which the

proprietors formerly *spared* no expense to *provide*, and *no occasion* to bring forward. In the theatre of the Italian opera, to which *we* have been compelled to have recourse, *we* are *naturally* not so well *provided* to give life to the works of *our native poets*, and *we* must *make large drafts upon your indulgence*. Permit *me*, however, to state, that *we* shall *make* daily progress in bettering *our present provision*, and shall immediately *set about* to erect a new theatre, such as *we* think will be worthy of the metropolis *where* it is situated, *in which* *we* hope to be able to receive you by next September.”—[Times Newspaper, Sept. 27, 1808.]

Judging from this specimen, he must be a bold flatterer who would reckon among Mr. KEMBLE’S accomplishments that of oratory.

The Covent-Garden company continued their exertions at the Opera-House till the 5th of November, when they removed to the Little Theatre, Haymarket, for the remainder of the season.

On the 24th of February following, only a few days more than five months after the destruction of one theatre, its rival Drury experienced a similar fatality. At the time of the conflagration, Mr. SHERIDAN, whose interest was so largely involved, was in his place in the House of Commons, where it was kindly proposed, from a feeling of sympathy, by Mr. Elliot and the then Earl Temple, that the debate should be adjourned. But Mr. SHERIDAN had sufficient fortitude to reply, “that however lamentable the event might be as to himself, he thought it not of such a nature as ought to interrupt the business of the nation.” Most of the members, however, immediately left the House, and repaired to Westminster-Bridge, whence they had a fine view of the awful spectacle. The red flickering glare cast by the reflection of the flames on the Thames, and on the houses and steeples, over a wide space, owing to the great height of the blazing

edifice, presented a singularly striking and sublime scene to the spectator. The appearance of London on this memorable night, is as truly as it is beautifully described in the following lines, from Lord Byron's Address on the opening of New Drury.

“ Ye who beheld, oh sight, admired and mourn'd,
Whose radiance mocked the ruin it adorn'd !
Through clouds of fire the massy fragments riven,
Like Israel's pillar chased the night from heaven ;
Saw the long column of revolving flames
Shake its red shadow o'er the startled Thames,
While thousands throng'd around the burning dome,
Shrank back appalled, and trembled for their home ;
As glared the volumed blaze and ghastly shone
The skies with lightnings awful as their own—
Till black'ning ashes, and the lonely wall,
Usurp'd the Muse's realm, and mark'd her fall !”

The magnitude of the loss occasioned by this severe catastrophe was immense ; indeed, all the interests embarked in the concern were so entirely overwhelmed and depressed by the fate of the building, that it appeared utterly impracticable to reunite them, for the purpose of constituting a new establishment. The remains of the shattered property would probably have continued in ruins to this day, but for the generous interposition and active exertions of the late lamented Mr. Whitbread. He it was who undertook the Herculean task of disentangling the perplexed affairs of the theatre, and of extricating, as much as possible, all parties from their embarrassed situation. His name, his influence, his character, and his unremitted efforts, inspired confidence, and insured success.

Meanwhile, the most strenuous endeavours were being made by the proprietors of the late theatre in Covent-Garden, to rebuild that structure on an enlarged and more magnificent scale. The first stone

was laid on Saturday, December 31, 1803, with much state and ceremony, by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, accompanied by the Duke of Sussex, and attended by many persons of the first rank and distinction. A grand lodge of free-masons was held at Freemason's Hall, specifically for this purpose; the members of which, to the number of 400, went on foot in procession from Queen-Street, at half past twelve, and arrived at Bow-Street a little before one, at which hour exactly His Royal Highness appeared. The Prince was received by the Earl of Moira, as Acting Grand Master, and by Mr. KEMBLE and Mr. HARRIS at the head of the other gentlemen. The bands immediately played God save the King, and a royal salute was fired. His Royal Highness then proceeded to lay the basement stone, with the usual formality: John Bayford, Esq. (Grand Treasurer) having deposited in a cavity prepared in the stone, a box containing a series of the coins of the present reign, together with two large medals, one of bronze, bearing a head of His Royal Highness on one side, and on the other the following inscription—

GEORGIUS.
PRINCEPS WALLIARUM.
THEATRI.
REGIS INSTAURANDI AUSPICIIS.
IN HORTIS BENEDICTINIS.
LONDINI.
FUNDAMENTA.
Sua Manu Locavit.
M.DCCC.VIII.

The other medal, engraved on copper, bore on one side,

ROBERT SMIRKE, Architect.

On the reverse was engraven—

Under the Auspices of
His most sacred Majesty GEORGE III.
King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Ireland,
The Foundation-Stone of the Theatre,
Covent Garden,
Was laid by His Royal Highness
GEORGE PRINCE OF WALES,
M.DCCC.VIII.

There was also on a part of the stone, "Long live George Prince of Wales," and "To the King," with a medallion of the prince. His Royal Highness having expressed his wishes for the prosperity of the undertaking, another salute was fired, and the business concluded amidst the cheers of the spectators. During the ceremony, detachments of the life and foot guards patrolled the streets, and lined the area.

The united zeal and labour of the great number of workmen employed, under the direction of Mr. Copeland, the builder, enabled the proprietors to complete their undertaking, at an expense of 150,000*l.*, and open the house for performance on Monday, September 18, 1809, in less than twelve months from the date of the destruction of the old, and in ten months from that of the foundation of the new theatre.

We have now come to an extraordinary epoch in theatrical history. The circumstances of the dispute, distinguished by the name of the O. P. contest, between the managers of Covent-Garden Theatre and the public, are so well known, that we shall dismiss them with as much brevity as possible. Some account of this memorable disturbance is, however, necessary; our object must therefore be to shorten

the details, excluding a great portion of minute and unimportant matter.

Immediately after the destruction of the old theatre, rumours were circulated, that it was the intention of the proprietors to raise the prices of admission; and it was expected that this intention would be put in effect on the removal of the company to the King's Theatre. A spirit of resistance was however excited against the proposed increase, which was considered an imposition, and the design, at least for the present, was abandoned. The manager however resolved to avail himself of the first opportunity. Previously to the opening of the new theatre therefore, it was announced that the price to the boxes would be seven shillings instead of six, and to the pit four shillings instead of three shillings and sixpence. It was also understood the number of private boxes was increased. Thus were materials collected, which were soon to explode in thunder.

The pieces selected for the first night were, the tragedy of "Macbeth," and the entertainment of "The Quaker."

An immense crowd assembled at an early hour of the day, and which kept continually increasing until the doors were opened. The rush was then violent in the extreme; but large as the theatre was, it could only contain a very small portion of the throng which anxiously strove for admittance. Those who had the good fortune to get in, were instantly struck with admiration at the sudden beauty and splendour of the scene, and the effect being also heightened by contrast with the gloomy streets and passages in which many of the audience had been waiting, perhaps for hours, amidst the suffocating pressure of the throng,—to them the change was really enchanting. A more superb or

brilliant *coup d'œil* it would be difficult for the mind to conceive. Yet this spot, on which so much care and expense had been successfully lavished, to make it, in appearance, almost an earthly paradise, was destined shortly to become a very Pandemonium—a rendezvous of beings resembling demons—the attractive focus of every species of discord.

God save the King, and *Rule Britannia* having been sung, Mr. KEMBLE made his appearance, dressed for *Macbeth*, and spoke an Address written by Horace Twiss, but which has nothing to recommend it for insertion. A dreadful storm immediately commenced; Mr. KEMBLE's voice was entirely lost in the tremendous peal by which he was saluted. The subjects of complaint were four, two of which have been already mentioned, namely—the advance of prices, and the additional private boxes; the others were, the engagement of Madame CATALANI, and the awkward construction of the upper gallery, which had the appearance of pigeon holes. The most indignant hostility was now manifested by the audience, who expressed, by the loudest vociferations from all parts of the house, their resolution to obtain a redress of what they considered their grievances. Mr. KEMBLE endeavoured, by the most submissive and imploring manner, to be heard, but in vain; he was at length obliged to withdraw, amidst shouts of hisses, groans, and execrations.

The discontent of the audience (if it be not a misnomer to style such an assemblage as now filled the house by that appellation,) was evinced, with but little intermission, during the whole evening. The play and the players were equally disregarded; not a syllable from the stage was heard by pit, boxes, or galleries; during the acts the audience stood up covered, with their backs to the curtain, and regularly sat down to recruit their strength as soon as the drop-scene fell. But while the play

proceeded, all seemed occupied in contriving and executing methods of annoyance. Amidst the chaotic din issuing from so many brazen throats, numerous exclamations were distinctly heard, when uttered in a pause of comparative calm, or when roared by the happy few, whose stentorian lungs surpassed those of their compeers. "Off! off! No private boxes! No pigeon holes! No Catalani! No spangle* boxes! 'While the stormy winds do blow!' Off! off!" &c. &c. resounded from every corner of the theatre.

The tumult at length increased to such a pitch, that several Bow-Street magistrates appeared upon the stage; one of whom took a paper from his pocket, understood to be the riot act, which however was not read. This imprudent step provoked still greater irritation; and the reception which these gentlemen experienced was such as they justly merited. They had no reason to complain of not being warmly greeted. The house was not cleared of its noisy visitors until two o'clock in the morning. Thus passed the first night.

The performances on the second evening were, "The Beggar's Opera," and "Is he a Prince?" As soon as the curtain was drawn up, the opposition manifested itself as violently as on the preceding night; and with but little variation in the manner of proceeding, except by the introduction of placards with suitable inscriptions, some of which were humorous enough. These insignia became on the succeeding evenings so numerous, that they almost entirely covered the pit, and the lower tier of boxes; and were found excellent vehicles for countless witticisms and pasquinades.

The contest continued six nights, without interruption; in which time several gentlemen, among

* The cant phrase for a seven-shilling piece.

whom was J. P. Smith, Esq. addressed the audience, and exhorted them to persevere in a determined but not a riotous manner—by such conduct, the proprietors, he said, would be compelled, in the end, to relinquish their unjust demands. Mr. KEMBLE was nightly called for, and asked whether he would concede to the public voice; but as his answers were not satisfactory, he was dismissed with signs of universal contumely. In one of these interviews, Mr. KEMBLE thought proper, in no very elegant phraseology, to meet the question of the public by an interrogatory of his own. Having come to the front of the stage, he said—

“ Ladies and Gentlemen, May I beg leave to ask *what it is you want?* ”

This was appropriately answered by mingled cries of “ You know what we want ; the question is insulting.” “ Off ! off ! ” To incense the town still more, constables, Bow-Street officers, and ruffians of every description, particularly fighting Jews, were hired to intimidate and maltreat the discontented. The trap-doors used in pantomimes, &c. were opened to receive any luckless adventurer, who might have attempted to make his *debut* without managerial sanction ; and fire-engines were placed in an imposing manner on the stage. On the other side, placards, bugle horns, rattles, dustmen’s bells, whistles, wooden trumpets, &c. &c. were put in requisition, and produced the *concordia discors* with unrivalled effect.

On the sixth night, terms of accommodation were proposed by Mr. KEMBLE ; the purport of them was, that a Committee of Gentlemen should be appointed to examine the books of the theatre, and to decide on the necessity of the late alterations. Mr. KEMBLE at the same time intimated, that the engagement with Madame Catalani was

cancelled. The house was then closed till the decision of the Committee should be made known.

The theatre, in about ten days, was re-opened, it having been advertised that the report of the Committee, which consisted of the following gentlemen, namely,

John Sylvester, Esq. (Recorder),
Sir Thomas Plomer, (Solicitor-General),
John Whitmore, Esq. (Governor of the Bank),
J. J. Angerstein, Esq. and
Sir Charles Price, Bart.

was in favour of the proprietors. The contention was therefore renewed with redoubled ardour. Many persons were taken by the officers before the magistrates, for wearing the letters O. P. in their hats, and for shouting, &c. and compelled to give heavy bail. Among others, HENRY CLIFFORD, Esq. a barrister, was seized by order of Mr. BRANDON, and conveyed to Bow-Street; but the magistrates did not think proper to order his committal. He consequently brought an action against Mr. BRANDON, for an alleged assault and false imprisonment, which was tried before Sir J. MANSFIELD, in the Court of Common Pleas, on the 5th of December. Mr. Serjeant BEST was for the plaintiff, and Mr. Serjeant SHEPHERD for the defendant. The jury gave a verdict of 5*l.* damages! thus setting at nought the opinion of the judge, who declared that Mr. CLIFFORD's conduct was illegal. Westminster-Hall rang with the applause that accompanied this verdict; the noise was so loud, that Lord ELLENBOROUGH, who was at that moment summing up in the neighbouring Court, was obliged to stop, and clapped both his hands upon his ears. Mr. KEMBLE, (who was subpoenaed,) and Mr. HARRIS were present at the close of this memorable trial.

The Proprietors henceforth began to show them-

selves tractable. At an O. P. dinner shortly afterwards at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Mr. KEMBLE was present, and an amicable arrangement was effected, upon the following terms:

1. "That the private boxes should be reduced to the same state as they were in the year 1802.

2. "That the pit should be 3s. 6d.—the boxes, 7s.

3. "That an apology should be made on the part of the Proprietors, to the public, and Mr. BRANDON dismissed.

4. "That all prosecutions and actions, on both sides, should be abandoned."

These propositions being accepted, harmony was restored, with the exception of a slight rolling of the waves, after such a terrible tempest. The opposition lasted sixty-six nights. Mr. Brandon, who had made himself particularly obnoxious, was compelled to *resign*, but was soon suffered to be re-instated.

Of the effusions, written and verbal, to which the O. P. war gave birth, some possessed ingenuity and merit; but the generality, like most pieces on temporary and local subjects, were contemptible. We have subjoined a few of the best of these trifles in a note*.

* "John Kemble alone is the cause of this riot,
When he lowers his prices, John Bull will be quiet."

"Silence, Sirs, King John's head *itches*."

The following is the conclusion of a parody on "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT."—"This is the *Manager*, full of scorn, who *raised the prices* to the people forlorn, and directed the *thief-taker*, shaven and shorn, to take up John Bull with his *bugle-horn*, who hissed the CAT engaged to squall to the *poor* in the *pigton-holes* over

Through the whole of this civil warfare, it was highly to the credit of the public, that no outrages

the *boxes*, let to the *great* that visit the house that JACK built.—‘ O. P. expects each man will do his duty.’

“ Since potent hisses prove the public mind,
Which has of late been of the hissing kind ;
Let those hiss now who never hiss’d before—
And those who’ve always hiss’d now hiss the more.”

“ The *Times* and *Post* are bought and sold,
To Kemble’s pride, and Kemble’s gold.”

“ The third floor of this house to be let, with conveniences.”

	L.	L.
“ The necessity of advance !		
“ Salary of Mr. Kemble	6000	} 7000
“ Benefit of Do.	1000	
“ Salary of Mr. and Mrs. C. Kemble ..	5000	} 7000
“ Two Benefits	2000	
“ Salary of Mrs. Siddons	3675	} 4675
“ Benefit of Do.	1000	
“ Salary of Madame Catalani	4200	} 6200
“ Two Benefits	2000	

“ Total to five individuals..... L. 25,175

“ Oh !!!”

“ DIED O. P. AGED *sixty-six*.”

“ No man acted such a part on such a *stage*. In his infancy he was noisy, which was attributed to *bad management*. Although a good pugilist, he hated *private Boxes*. He was author of many humorous pieces in prose and verse. Like Sir Roger Coverly he gave name to a *DANCE*. His matrimonial connections were not considered very happy, as he had frequently been reproached for his *HORNS*. He was, however, accounted a good

of any kind were committed by them. The house sustained not the least injury ; not even the slightest indication of an attempt appeared to destroy the property of the theatre, as in the case of theatrical tumults in former times. The reader will probably remember, that when the taste of John Bull was against Garrick's " Chinese Festival," the damage done to the interior of the theatre was very great ; and not satisfied with the mischief effected there, the rioters proceeded in a body to Mr. GARRICK'S residence, where they broke all the windows, and committed other acts of violence. They would have also set fire to the premises, but for the timely interference of the military and civil power. In the more recent disputes, the conduct of the managers, in introducing police officers, and pugilistic ruffians, to overawe the public, and suppress their voice, was more disgraceful and even culpable than any thing which marked the proceedings of their opponents.

Mr. KEMBLE, soon after this memorable contest, disposed of his share in Covent-Garden Theatre, and resigned his situation as stage-manager, to which office Mr. FAWCETT was appointed as his successor.

During the last few years, the subject of this sketch has performed only at intervals, the state of his health being such as not to permit that regular continuity of exertion which he formerly endured. He has latterly experienced frequent recurrences of

Christian, as he had professed a great antipathy to the Jews. He was also a loyal character, as he sung every night " God save the King." A *pit* was made for his body—a barrister was the grave-digger. Kemble read the funeral service with great solemnity, and Brandon and Harris were the *Chief Mourners*."

that excruciating malady, the gout, which, at times, has grown to a very alarming height. About two seasons ago he formed the singular intention of coming out in the character of *Sir John Falstaff*, but was prevented putting his design in effect, by a sudden and severe attack, which lasted several weeks, and assumed so threatening an aspect as to lead to an apprehension of the worst consequences. He has since altogether relinquished this curious idea, and his friends need not, perhaps, regret that it was abandoned, but that it was conceived. Mr. KEMBLE probably understands the character of *Sir John* as well or better than any other man; but those talents and peculiarities which have raised him to eminence as a tragedian, utterly disqualify him to shine in comic parts—and the Knight is the very essence of humour.

In the autumn of the year 1814, Mr. KEMBLE, accompanied by Mrs. SIDDONS, revisited Paris, where they remained about two months. While in that capital, the writer occasionally met them; and once he saw Mrs. SIDDONS under circumstances that may perhaps excite a smile. Some regiments had been appointed to be reviewed by Louis XVIII, for the purpose of their being presented with the colours of the restored dynasty. The morning for which the review was fixed was sultry, and dust flew in abundance. From the Tuilleries to the Champ de Mars, the streets were lined with soldiers, and crowds of citizens were flocking, in all directions, to view the ceremony. In the midst of the throng, under a warm sun, and enveloped in clouds of dust, that form which had been so often gazed at with admiration and delight, by taste, rank, and fashion—that majestic form was seen eagerly advancing on foot, over the Pont-Royal, towards the spot where the interesting spectacle was to be witnessed. Be it remembered, that a *cabriolet* or a

fiacre may be hired to go from one extremity of the city to the other for a franc and a half, or about *fifteen pence!*

On Mr. KEMBLE's return, he was greeted with extraordinary and enthusiastic marks of applause by the audience, on his first appearance; a laurel chaplet was thrown on the stage, and the whole assemblage simultaneously rose to do him honour. Such tokens of approbation appeared to excite in him the most grateful feelings; but with becoming modesty, he evinced no notice of the crown of laurel intended for his brow.

Our famous tragedian re-appeared at Covent-Garden, after a temporary absence, on the 23d of April 1816; a day which is entitled to particular commemoration, as that which completed the second centenary from the death of SHAKSPEARE; as well as for the noble effort which Mr. KEMBLE displayed on that evening. The bard, to whose name no epithet can add lustre, and no pompous title dignify beyond its own simple and native grandeur, died on the anniversary of his birth; as if nature had deemed no day of all the year so fit for the departure of his spirit from its mortal habitation, as that which had been distinguished by his nativity. Strange! that his admirers (and who does not aspire to that appellation?) should have suffered so conspicuous an opportunity to pass, without testifying, in an appropriate manner, their veneration for his genius, and their reverence for his memory. Yet, so it was; nothing but a half-farcical, half-pantomimical exhibition, in the direction of which we presume the managers consulted no soul but themselves, was prepared in the metropolis, to celebrate an epoch, which ought to have aroused the brightest talents, and called forth the most exalted patronage of the country. Bustle and pageantry, the ingredients of which Garrick's jubilee was composed, were revived in that abortion of vanity, on the

present occasion; a tribute, it must be confessed, sufficiently miserable, but even that was, if possible, as well as the object of it, degraded, by its being made a means of gratifying the cupidity of the proprietors, who caused it to be repeated on several subsequent evenings. The most signal homage paid to the memory of the great Poet, was the performance of Mr. KEMBLE as *Coriolanus*, the play of that name preceding the mockery above-mentioned; and it is needless to add, that in this character he excited the utmost delight and admiration in an audience, which filled to excess every part of the theatre.

We have now brought these Memoirs nearly to a close. It only remains to be added, that the distinguished subject of these pages bade farewell to his Scottish friends, in the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, on Saturday, March 29, 1817, when he spoke an Address, written, for the occasion, by WALTER SCOTT, Esq. and that he is now performing, for the last time, his series of characters in London, as his dramatic career will terminate with the present season.

In private life, Mr. KEMBLE's manners and habits are those of the gentleman and the scholar. His inclination leads him to retirement and study; and his partiality for dramatic literature has induced him to collect a theatrical library, which, as combining selectness and extent, is perhaps the finest in the kingdom. By his marriage he has not had issue; but we believe that, in other respects, he has been uniformly happy in his domestic relations. We shall not offer, in this place, any remarks on his professional conduct and capacity, but conclude by observing, that he has deservedly acquired an affluent fortune, the esteem and regard of many persons, whose friendship is honour, and a name that will survive and shine, at least as long as the Drama exists in this country.

The following Extract is inserted, as containing, in several respects, a poetical and just eulogium; but it does not possess equal merit throughout; and in some passages is palpably erroneous.

Lines from a Poem called "THE STAGE."

Written by John Taylor, Esq.

To close in order due our long career,
See Kemble march, majestic and severe,
Fraught with uncommon powers of form and face,
He comes the pomp of Tragedy to grace.

Fertile in genius, and matur'd by art,
Not soft to steal, but stern to seize the heart,
In mould of figure, and in frame of mind,
To him th' heroic sphere must be assign'd ;
August in daring, he adorns the stage,—
The gloomy subtlety, the savage rage,
The scornful menace, and the cynic ire,—
The hardy valour, and the patriot fire,
These speak the vigour of the master's hand,
And o'er the fancy give him firm command,
As Richard, Timon, and Macbeth proclaim,
Or stern Coriolanus' nobler aim.

Nor fierce alone, for well his powers can shew
Calm declamation, and attemper'd woe,
The virtuous Duke, who sway awhile declines,
Yet checks the Deputy's abhorred designs,
And in the sov'reign or the saintly guise,
Benevolently just, or meekly wise.
The Dane bewailing now a father's fate,
Now deeply pond'ring man's mysterious state,
Tender and dignified alike are seen,
The philosophic mind and princely mien.

When merely tender, he appears too cold,
Or rather fashion'd in too rough a mould,
Nor fitted love in softer form to wear,—
But stung with pride, or maddening with despair,

As when the lost Octavian's murmurs flow
 In full luxuriance of romantic woe.
 Yet where Orlando cheers desponding age,
 Or the sweet wiles of Rosaland engage,
 We own that manly graces finely blend
 The tender lover, and the soothing friend.

Though Nature was so prodigally kind
 In the bold lineaments of form and mind,
 As if to check a fond excess of pride,
 The pow'rs of voice she scantily supplied.
 Oft when the hurricanes of passion rise,
 For correspondent tones he vainly tries,
 To aid the storm no towering note combines,
 And the spent breath th' unequal task declines :
 Yet, spite of Nature, he compels us still
 To own the potent triumph of his skill ;
 While with dread pauses, deepen'd accents roll,
 Whose awful energy arrests the soul.

At times, perchance, the spirit of the scene,
 The impassion'd accent, and impressive mien,
 May lose their wonted force, while too refin'd,
 He strives by niceties to strike the mind ;
 For meaning too precise, inclin'd to pore,
 And labour for a point unknown before ;
Untimely playing thus the critic's part,
To gain the head when he should smite the heart.

Yet still must candour, on reflection, own
 Much careful comment has been shrewdly shewn ;
 Nor here let puny malice vent its gall,
 And texts with skill restor'd *new readings* call.
Kemble for actors nobly led the way,
And prompted them to think as well as play.

With cultur'd sense, and with experience sage,
 Patient he cons the time-disfigur'd page,
 Hence oft we see him with success explore,
 And clear the dross from rich poetic ore ;
 Trace through the maze of diction passion's clew,
 And open latent character to view.

Though for the Muse of Tragedy design'd,
 In form, in feature, passion, and in mind ;

Yet would he fain the comic nymph embrace,
Who seldom, without awe, beholds his face;
Whene'er he tries the airy and the gay,
Judgment, not Genius, marks the cold essay;
But in a graver province he can please,
With well-bred spirit, and with manly ease,
When genuine wit, with Satire's active force,
And faithful love pursues its generous course,
Here, in his Valentine, might Congreve view
Th' embodied portrait, vig'rous, warm and true.

Nor let us with unhallow'd touch presume
To pluck one sprig of laurel from the tomb;
Yet, with due reverence for the mighty dead,
'Tis just the fame of living worth to spread;
And could the noblest vet'rans now appear,
Kemble might keep his state, devoid of fear,
Still while observant of his proper line,
With native lustre, as a rival shine.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS
ON
MR. KEMBLE'S TALENTS,
WITH
Some Introductory Remarks on the Stage.

As English dramatic poetry so early attained an unrivalled maturity, it is somewhat remarkable that the art of stage-representation, and the study of acting, should have improved so slowly. It is only within late years, as it respects scenic illusion, and in reference to a general system of propriety, that the British stage has approximated to excellence; and it will admit of doubt, whether any actor, capable of identifying the characters of Shakspeare, appeared before Garrick. The fact of this tardy progress will seem the more curious, when we consider how much of the popularity of the Drama depends on the attractions with which it is invested in a theatre. There are many who feel no delight in reading a play, who nevertheless receive pleasure from its performance. It might therefore naturally be expected, that human ingenuity would have been long since tasked to its utmost capability, to complete what the poet began, and so hold a perfect "mirror up to Nature." To what causes so great a delay in the promotion of such an end is to be ascribed, it would not be uninteresting to enquire.

Poetry, it is true, is the immediate result of an intellectual operation; whereas the acting of a play is an event produced by mechanical and physical, as well as intellectual agency. The former, therefore, being solely the work of the mind, may be at once created in the highest degree of possible perfection; the latter being an artificial effect, accomplished partly by external means, and depending on uncertain contingencies, can acquire excellence only by the aid of time and experience. What-

ever issues spontaneously from genius, is the offspring of Nature.

“ Nature’s kindling breath
Must fire the chosen genius ; Nature’s hand
Must string his nerves, and imp his eagle wings,
Impatient of the painful steep, to soar
High as the summit.” AKENSIDE.

But mere art is restricted and governed by rule and practice ; and proceeds by a gradual and almost imperceptible motion. Yet this distinction does not afford a sufficient solution of the fact, that there should have been a space of time seemingly so disproportionate, between the birth and brightest era of the Drama, and the corresponding epoch of the Theatre.

But even in the general business of a Theatre, it would be erroneous to suppose that genius is supererogatory, though its sphere may not be the most capacious, nor its efforts the most dignified. There is, however, an expansion for the conspicuous display of this quality in the managerial, and other departments, to which belongs the provision of what is necessary and appropriate in representation, independently of acting. The machinist, the painter, the musician, may exercise their respective tastes and powers, inventive and imitative ; the scholar may discover his classic judgment, by introducing judicious historical embellishments ; and the manager may evince his superior skill and fancy, by the arrangement and harmony of the whole. In all these, genius may not be essential, but it certainly would not be superfluous. In the actor, its inspirations are indeed indispensable, to enable him to give adequate effect, truth, and discrimination, to the personification of character, without which requisites there can be no deceptive influence in the passing scene. Yet if great mental talents were not necessarily the property of a theatre, it would remain a matter of surprise, that nearly two centuries should have elapsed from the composition of the finest dramas in the world before they were represented on the stage with tolerable accuracy.

Those who would explore the causes of this delay in completing the great purpose of the Drama, must seek them in the character and events of the times. It is not expedient, in this place, to enquire minutely into those causes ; but it may not be unamusing or irrelevant to trace them superficially. In the first place, however, it is necessary to ascertain, as far as possible, what portion of merit acting possessed originally ; that is to say, in the time of Shakspeare.

Notwithstanding the opinion of an eminent lecturer, Mr. Thelwall, who considers that Shakspeare would not have written so many admirable plays, if he had not found good actors to perform them ; it may be contended, that in the days of our immortal bard, the manner in which plays were represented, was little superior to that in which itinerant shows are at present exhibited at fairs. Acting was then in its infancy. The dramatic productions which had been previously in vogue, were mostly compounds of monstrosities and nonsense, altogether remote from the likeness of any thing human, in plot, sentiment, or character ; and it will not be readily assented to, that those who would submit to assist in the representation of such preposterous absurdities, were capable of raising the character of acting much above a similar level. Shakspeare, and other authors contemporary with him, at once reformed the stage from its barbarous and unnatural condition ; or, to use the words of Cumberland, the true Drama received birth and perfection from their creative genius. Actors were now taught to represent mankind, and the actions of mankind ; and being placed, as it were, in a new world, and having Truth and Nature for their models, their performances necessarily assumed a style and spirit more conformable to those standards. Yet was the art but in its infancy ; and acknowledging the incalculable value of this important reformation, it seems unreasonable to believe that it suddenly advanced the histrionic profession to a pitch of excellence comparable with its present height.

Few particulars, it is true, are extant, concerning the stage at the period referred to ; excepting such as may be gleaned from old plays. But from this source suffi-

cient information may be acquired to show, at least in some degree, its then state. There is a passage in Hamlet's instructions to the players, whence, it may be presumed, some knowledge may be gained upon this subject:

“O there be players that *I have seen play,—and heard others praise, and that highly,—*not to speak it profanely,—that neither having the accent of Christian, nor the gait of Christian, Pagan, nor man, have so *strutted and bellowed*, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made them, and not made them well, *they imitated humanity so abominably.*”

From this passage may be inferred Shakspeare's sentiments of the actors of his day. He himself unquestionably knew what acting ought to be; he knew from intuition, and not from having witnessed any actual criterion; and he grieved at seeing its professors accord so little with the true spirit and meaning of the art. He therefore drew rules for acting according to his own ideas—rules from Nature. These famous instructions were probably at first designed for the benefit of particular individuals: and in the passage above quoted, it is not unlikely that he expressed his opinion of their want of merit, adopting this covert mode of conveying advice and reproof, to avoid irritating private feelings, and incensing his most useful friends. And as this excellent admonition occurs in one of his most popular plays, it would necessarily be brought often to the minds of those for whom it was intended, and serve, as it indeed has served, as a lasting memento to themselves and their successors. It is evident that he alluded to actors of eminence—those who obtained applause, for he says he has *heard them* not only praised, but *praised highly*.

The conclusion to be drawn from these premises is, that the Theatre, as then beginning to be established, on its true principles, afforded considerable pleasure by its novelty; and as that novelty had its origin in a correct observance of nature, the pleasure thus communicated was increased and confirmed by the approval of the judgment. But the taste of the age was not sufficiently pre-

pared to receive what was strictly chaste and natural; and the public mind would have been incapable of understanding or appreciating, even if there had been actors capable of delineating passion by all those delicate features, varying shades, and subtle transitions, which arouse both our susceptibilities and our admiration. Shakspeare's chief incentive to the composition of dramas was probably, that the employment procured him a more lucrative remuneration, and was more consonant with his genius than any other pursuit which he could follow; and with these inducements, surely no additional motives were necessary to influence his determination. The bard of Avon was so notoriously careless of his works, after they had passed from under his pen, that it is rather too much to believe he would have been deterred from writing, merely by the manner in which they might have been performed. If this position, therefore, be established, let us proceed to mark the progress of the art through its subsequent gradations.

During the reign of James, and the greater part of that of Charles the First, the encouragement given to the stage was extremely liberal, and must have powerfully stimulated the zeal and ability of its professors. The passion for representation was so general, especially among the nobility and the educated classes, that if it had continued to prevail, it would probably have accelerated, by a century, the grand climax of the art. An evil, however, arose, which was perhaps the natural consequence of this prevalent disposition; an evil to be lamented, both in respect to its effects upon the morals of society, and as exciting a prejudice against the Drama itself. This elegant and innocent recreation was too frequently degraded by the conduct of those unprincipled wretches, who did not scruple to become panders to the appetites of the licentious and depraved. And in proportion as virtue became alarmed or disgusted, the Theatre created an enemy against itself, which was too strong and inveterate to be easily or speedily subdued. But the most sacred establishments are liable to abuses; we ought not to judge of the Theatre by its corruptions,

but by its usefulness and design. Upon the whole, there can be little doubt that the histrionic art derived considerable improvement during this period; that the general effect must have been tolerably good, the fact of Inigo Jones, the celebrated architect, being frequently employed to furnish tasteful and magnificent decorations, will testify, as doubtless anxiety was felt to have every part of the representation equal. In another generation or two, if the course of the Drama had been uninterrupted, a genius might have sprung up, a Shakspeare of the scene, who would have supplied what was deficient, finished what was imperfect, refined what was coarse and crude, and raised what was low and contemptible.

But the events which followed—the disputes and troubles between Charles and the Parliament, which involved the whole kingdom in bloodshed and discord, suspended, not only the amusements, but the ordinary avocations of life. The Drama was almost entirely suppressed; its dependants were driven into obscurity; and in proportion as the puritanic party obtained power, the name of the Theatre, and of every thing connected with it, was visited with reproach and scorn. While hypocrisy and fanaticism prevailed, polite amusements suffered an almost total annihilation.

The Throne and the Theatre were revived together; or rather, the latter was created anew under the most infamous auspices. Every species of foreign vice was imported to our own shores, and the stage made a hot-bed to rear the exotic monster. The Drama consequently fell into deserved disrepute, and ceased to be a favourite amusement, excepting among the abandoned and the refuse of society. The monarch, to his lasting disgrace, was the fountain-head, the copious spring whence the stream of pollution flowed; it divided itself into numberless ramifications, and sapped the very basis of a nation's virtue. A large proportion of the people soon became infected by the example of their superiors; and neither the Drama nor the nation has yet recovered from the effects of the abominable licentiousness of the reign of the second Charles. Authors of profligate character wrote for the stage, not so much from the wish to be distin-

guished for literary talents, as to indulge their impure propensities, and revel in a gross imagination. The names of many writers of that day, denote volumes of indecent trash. Others, who were prompted by more laudable feelings, were constrained by poverty, and the general vitiated taste, to follow in the same train. They were obliged to regard reputation less than emolument. Among these may be included the immortal names of Dryden and Otway. To these circumstances must be added, that the chasm in dramatic history, occasioned by the civil war, was so great, that before the Theatre was restored, its old experienced veterans had ceased to exist, or were too old to be of service. Nor had they tutored others to supply their places, for the school of acting had been long closed. The models of the preceding age survived only in the imperfect recollection of a few, who probably felt little interest in the concerns of the revived Drama. The art was consequently again in a primitive state; and before it could regain its former improved condition, a generation at least must pass away.

Acting, it would not be difficult to show, consisted, at that period, in formal monotonous recitation; a face either positively blank, or extravagantly distorted; a precise, frigid motion of the body, and a regular set of ceremonious genuflections, varied, like the stage dresses, according to the approved fashion of the day. The effect of this style, formed in imitation of the French, was speedily to fatigue the audience: a broad imperfect outline was presented, but there was no colouring, no tints, no light or shade; none of the superior requisites which constitute a finished painting. Dryden, in his preface to "Don Sebastian," complains that many of his finest passages were omitted in representation, as being likely to cause weariness in the audience. But this could happen only from the imperfectness of the performers, from their inability to embody the character, and express the language of their author with suitable nicety and embellishment. It could not have possibly occurred then, that a piece should have been saved by the exertion of the actors; but, in modern times, how few pieces would

escape damnation by their intrinsic merit! Now the super-eminent talents of the performers resemble charity—they cover a multitude of faults. Audiences were formerly like Sterne's Critic, who looked more at the time than the manner of a performer's delivery. "There is a vast difference betwixt a public entertainment on the theatre, and a private reading in the closet: in the first, we are confined to time; and though we talk not by the hour-glass, *yet the watch often drawn out of the pocket, warns the actors that their audience is weary.**" What would be thought of a man who should draw a watch out of his pocket, to denote impatience, at Mr. KEMBLE's *Coriolanus*, or Mr. KEAN's *Richard*?

Such, we may venture to affirm, was the character of the performances of those days, and such or similar was the style of acting at a later date. It does not, at least, seem that the art was very materially improved when Betterton flourished, nearly half a century after its revival, judging from the following description of that celebrated player.

"Mr. Betterton, (although a superlative good actor,) laboured under an ill figure, being clumsily made, *having a great head, a short thick neck, stooped in the shoulders, and had fat short arms, which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach. His left hand frequently lodged in his breast, between his coat and waistcoat, while with his right hand he prepared his speech.* His actions were few, but just. He had *little eyes, and a broad face, a little pock-fretten, a corpulent body, and thick legs with large feet.* He was better to meet than to follow, for his aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic; in his latter time, a little paralytic. His voice was *low and grumbling*; yet he could tune it by an artful climax, which enforced attention even from the fops and orange-girls. He was incapable of dancing, even in a country-dance, as was Mrs. Barry; but their good qualities were more than equal to their deficiencies.†"

* Preface to *Don Sebastian*.

† Anthony Aston's *Supplement to Cibber's Lives of the Famous Actors and Actresses*.

This "ill figure" would be no slight disadvantage to a tragedian of the present day, however "superlative" might be his talents; and though we do not think that personal qualifications are the principal essentials of an actor, we are convinced that deformity would now effectually operate to prevent its possessor obtaining the first rank in tragedy or genteel comedy. There are, it is true, some characters in which a grotesque figure may increase the desired effect; but these comic parts were not in Betterton's line. Independently however of his person, his manner was such as no modern audience would tolerate. He appears to have acted in a laboured and methodical, or rather mechanical style, delivering his speeches with the gravity of the pulpit, and the attitude of a parliamentary orator. He might have been a good reader of declamatory parts, but not an actor of feeling or enthusiasm, nor an imitator of the minute workings of Nature.

The evil was not that there were no men of ability in the profession, but that talent was cramped and fettered by artificial rules. The very principle of their acting was bad; it precluded a due exercise of the powers of the mind. The feelings were equally under controul. If an actor happened to be impressed with a sensibility of his part, it was incumbent that he should be cautious in giving scope to his feelings, lest he might be so unfortunate as to cause offence, by a violation of fashionable decorum, or of that respect to which an audience considered itself entitled. It was necessary that actors should be at least as particular in their behaviour to their patrons, as in their attention to the scene. Some boldness was requisite to break through these trammels, and this a powerful genius only could perform.

Thus, though we are indebted to the Restoration for the re-establishment of the Theatre, to the same cause must be also ascribed the affectation and absurdity by which it was deformed, and the licentiousness by which it was disgraced. But the writings of Jeremy Collier, Addison, and others, tended to purify it from its grossness, and put it upon a more respectable footing; thus

inducing many, who had shrunk from it in disgust, to favour it with their countenance and protection. At length Garrick appeared, and produced a memorable revolution in the art. It is needless to say more of this great actor, than that he was equally happy in tragedy and comedy; equally just in his conceptions, and admirable in his delineation of character. He acknowledged no standards but those of Truth and Nature. In him were all

“ The grace of action, the adapted mien,
Faithful as Nature to the varied scene;
Th’ expressive glance, whose subtle comment draws
Entranc’d attention, and a mute applause;
Gesture that marks, with force and feeling fraught,
A sense in silence, and a will in thought;
Harmonious speech, whose pure and liquid tone
Gives verse a music, scarce confess’d its own;
As light from gems assumes a brighter ray,
And, deck’d with orient hues, transcends the day!
Passions wild break, and frown that awes the sense,
And every charm of gentler eloquence.”

Representation has now attained a summit of perfection which it never before reached. That it might have arrived much earlier at equal excellence, is not denied; but that the commotions in the life-time of the first Charles, the interregnum of the monarchy, the plague, and the fire of London, were efficient causes, operating to the entire extinction of the Drama. The Restoration brought with it evils foreign to the growth, and restrictions incompatible with the genius of the country. This was the artificial reign of the Drama; and it lasted till the appearance of Garrick, whose death, as was said by Dr. Johnson, “ eclipsed the gaiety of nations.” His genius accomplished all that could be desired in individual representation, but, in the general, he left much to be done by his successor; and it was not long before one stepped forward, in the person of the subject of the foregoing Memoir, who was equal to the task.

John Philip Kemble’s style of acting is so well known,

his merits have been so justly eulogised, his defects so ably exposed, and his peculiarities so minutely scrutinized, that any novelty of remark upon these topics can scarcely be expected. Criticism and panegyric have been equally vigilant, and equally extreme in their censure and applause. With so much public solicitude directed towards him, during a period of more than thirty years, it is not surprising that little or nothing worthy of attention can be added to what has been already said concerning him. It seems therefore, at first, rather a superfluous task to enter upon this subject; but a moment's reflection will satisfy us, that to discourse upon what is in itself pleasing, is to excite pleasure. Whatever we are fondly interested in, we love to contemplate; a father dwells on the features of his child, a lover on the portrait of his mistress, and a poet on Milton or Shakspeare.—So can we likewise ponder the histrionic efforts of a Kemble.

Who that has seen this distinguished actor perform, has not admired him? Who that has witnessed him in either of his principal characters will easily forget him? How many are there who number his performances among their most pleasing recollections! Other actors may display more versatile or brilliant powers; but there are some characters which, after him, will perhaps never find an adequate representative, or in which, at all events, he will never be excelled—his *Penruddock*, his *Brutus*, and his *Coriolanus* are exquisitely perfect examples. He has, however, other claims to respect and applause, besides those of an actor. To him we are indebted for the excellence of those auxiliary aids—that exactness of parts, that minute propriety, generally, which now characterise dramatic exhibitions, and which are so necessary to produce a full impression. The leading objection preferred against Mr. Kemble has been on the ground of elaborate study; but if this disposition has proved an injury to his performance, it has been honourable to his management, and its results will be permanently beneficial to the Drama. Mr. Garrick imparted, perhaps, the highest perfection to his own acting; but he made every

thing subservient to that end. He sacrificed general to particular effect. He did not aim at painting a complete picture ; if one figure was sufficiently prominent or finished—and that figure was himself—he was satisfied. It was an error to say, in his time, that the play of Hamlet or Lear was represented ; it would have been more proper to have said, that Garrick performed the principal character in those plays. His attention was absorbed in his own personal display. Mr. Kemble did not continue this practice ; he directed his attention to the general action of the stage ; to every thing that was passing, or supposed to be passing ; and contributed, by all possible means, to the effect of the whole.

These technical arrangements, however apparently insignificant in themselves, are of important use in representation ; unless they are carefully and strictly attended to, the finest performances are impaired. Could the mind for an instant imagine an actor performing Cato in a modern suit, of fashionable cut, to be the famous Roman ? Yet this was an impropriety not wholly rectified till the time of Kemble. He judiciously reformed it, and introduced, in this particular, an accuracy entirely novel. Public observation is now keenly turned to any instance in which classical, historical, or even tasteful authority is violated.

Another respect in which Mr. Kemble is eminently entitled to praise is, the support he has rendered to our best dramas, especially to those of Shakspeare. He has studied to keep paramount in public esteem, those works which are most worthy of that distinction ; and by so laudable a zeal, has thus conferred valuable benefits on a whole people. The writings of our immortal bard are better understood, and far more generally read, in consequence of his judgment and exertions, than they were at any former period. Numberless controversies have arisen upon disputed or obscure passages ; and, perhaps from all, some light has been elicited, and some knowledge gained. A manager who discharges his duties honestly and ably, deserves public thanks and reward ;

and to this praise Mr. Kemble's title has never been impeached.

"A theatre," says Arthur Murphy, "is not a great warehouse, where scenes and dresses, show, machinery, and thunder and lightning, are hoarded up for public curiosity. A regular playhouse is not to be reduced to the low footing of Sadler's Wells, or the exhibitions of Exeter Change. . . . The manager knows that the public must be amused. The people run in crowds to see what is presented to them; and when, by giving nothing worthy of a rational audience, a general apostacy from good sense is brought about and established, a manager may then pretend that he complies with the public taste."

Mr. Kemble's person is about the middle stature, and well-proportioned; his features are rather strong than delicate, bold than tender, fixed than flexible; his eyes want the lustre of genius, but are not dull; his nose is of the aquiline shape, and completes a head of a fine antique cast. His form is altogether striking and dignified; the face is admirably adapted to express the loftier emotions, pride, anger, disdain. In proportion as the character which he performs is removed from the weaknesses of humanity, his delineation of it is assisted by his external endowments. His voice is deficient in sweetness and compass; his tones are hollow, like sounds issuing from a vault; but no actor manages his utterance more admirably, or could conceal such a defect better than he does.

Characters of strong leading passion,—but not passion in which tenderness is mixed up,—are those most suited to Mr. Kemble's peculiar powers. He can identify himself with the serious, the severe, the grand qualities of our nature; whether the impressiveness of the philosopher, the rigidity of the stoic, or the majesty of the warrior be displayed, in these he is equally eminent. Such beings are raised above the level of ordinary humanity; we almost regard them as belonging to other species; yet their characters may be admirably drawn, and true to nature; but their remoteness from our habits

and feelings precludes us from judging of them, or the manner in which they are represented, by a sentiment of what would be natural in ourselves. We do not ask ourselves whether, if we had the same dispositions, or were influenced by the same circumstances as they are, we should be exactly like them, for the *possibility* of our being like them, never occurs to us. We, in fact, look for something different from common-place existence, and therefore what is elaborate pleases, and even in extravagance we fancy *verisimilitude*. For this reason, study and preparation, though betrayed by the actor in such characters, do not offend, but rather accord with our ideas of propriety. He who would appear solemn, inflexible, or dignified, must be careful not to do the most unimportant things like other men. In such parts Mr. Kemble is completely successful; it is not the effervescence of genius, but the laboured spirit and energy of judgment which is required.

His extraordinary capability to represent so admirably certain characters, necessarily involves a disadvantage to him in others. Comedy, therefore, is altogether ungenial with his powers. He fails also to pourtray the operation of complicated feelings on the external frame; for *his face is not a language*; it is adapted to express with perfectness, strong, powerful passion only. Of the softness, the plaintiveness of love, he cannot give an idea.

Mr. Kemble's pronunciation has been the subject of much controversy and ridicule. His orthöepy has frequently been different from the established rule; as in the well-known instance of the word *aches*, which he pronounces as two syllables. The line

“ Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,”

requires such a pronunciation, or else the introduction of another word, to complete the measure. Whether Mr. Kemble's alteration, or the following is preferable, every one must decide for himself, though some will think neither necessary—

“ Fill all thy bones with aches, (and) make thee roar.”

Upon the whole, Mr. Kemble is to be considered as an actor of a limited range of parts; but in those for which Nature, and his own exertions, have qualified him, he towers above all competition. But his very best excellence is the acquirement of art; Nature has been liberal only to his person. The stage is indebted to him for many of its most valuable improvements; but it is doubtful whether to him must not also be ascribed some of its worst misfortunes. He substituted a showy, ostentatious style, for an unaffected, and a simple one. To understand and admire his performances, it was not requisite to be near him. Portraits in which the features are broad, distinct, and prominent, may be as well viewed at a distance as close; thus, as his acting has invariably an imposing air,—an air of importance or grandeur,—it strikes the senses equally in the gallery as in the pit. This style was calculated to please the multitude, and was applauded; and because it happened to be appropriate in some characters, was soon looked for in most. Mr. Kemble was held up as a model for other actors. Hence his numerous imitators; thus was effected a degeneracy of public taste, as respecting the Drama; hence an enlargement of the theatres beyond their old proper size,—from houses that held but 360 guineas, to houses that hold 800*l.* or upwards. The evil of large theatres is so obvious, that it need not be pointed out. If Garrick had found them of the same dimensions as they are now, he would have been “ *only understood in the neighbourhood of the orchestra, while the rest of the spectators would have discovered little else in the finest actor that ever lived, but the diminutiveness of his figure.*” This is precisely the case at the present time, with respect to Mr. Kean; and while such overgrown theatres are permitted, an evil will be encouraged, extremely detrimental to good acting.

To particularise the various beauties of Mr. Kemble's performances would be a praiseworthy attempt, and if ably achieved, would form a valuable addition to dramatic literature. In this essay, little in the manner of

an analysis can be given ; yet we cannot resist the pleasure of concluding with an unaffected tribute to his personification of Coriolanus,—the chief—

“ Whose brows exalted bear,
A wrath impatient, and a fiercer air,
Awake to all that that injured worth can feel.”

In his first encounter with the rabble, it is impossible not to admire the noble proportions and majestic *contour* of his figure ; the expression of his face, naturally of the Roman character ; his right arm erected in conscious authority ; his chest thrown forward, and his head slightly back ; his right leg fearlessly advanced, and firmness in all his attitude, together with the exact adjustment and tasteful folds of the classical drapery with which his person is invested, compose a most superb and commanding *tout ensemble* of the human form*. In the same scene, when the officer informs him, that the Volscians are in arms, a glow of exultation and anticipated triumph plays upon his features, while he quickly exclaims—

“ I’m glad on’t—.”

His manner here was finely indicative of the supposed emotions of his mind, as he turns from “ the musty superfluity ” he despises, yet is proud to protect. His method of suing, (if suing it may be termed) for the votes of the people, was inimitable ; stern, haughty and unbending, he thinks it an humiliation even to *demand* of such plebeians the boon he requires.—

“ ’Twas never my desire yet to trouble
The poor with begging,”

was uttered in a tone of bitter sarcasm, and revolting pride.

In the following passage, however, it may be sug-

* The portraits of Mr. Kemble, prefixed to these pages, are excellent miniature likenesses ; and in point of figure, attitude and costume, are strikingly accurate. That of Penruddock is a complete *fac-simile* of the man.

gested, though with due deference, that his manner was not suitable to the text.

Cor. "Well, then, I pray, your price of the consulship?"

Cit. The price is to ask it kindly.

Cor. Kindly?

Sir, I pray let me have it, I have wounds to show you,

Which shall be yours in private.—Your good voice, Sir."

The words in *italics* seem evidently to distinguish the style in which they should be delivered, not as Mr. Kemble delivered them, with the same inflexible mien, and tone of defiance, which characterise the other parts of his performance, but with an affected cringing air of supplication, an assumed mask of humility, in derision of the peoples' wishes. In confirmation of this opinion, one of the citizens afterwards says to the Tribunes—

"To my poor unworthy notice
He *mocked* us when he begged our voices."

But if, in this instance, Mr. Kemble was not correct, it is but fair to acknowledge that it would be difficult to detect another fault throughout his delineation of this character. With this single exception, the warmest eulogium would not transcend his merits. Through the whole of the humility scene, faithful to the true spirit of his hero, he nobly illustrated the following line;

"With a proud heart he wore his humble weeds."

In the first scene of the third act, his powers were exerted with extraordinary success; particularly when Menenius, attempting to allay the exasperation of Coriolanus, at the people withdrawing their votes, exhorts him to "be calm," the imperious and incensed Roman replies, with half-smothered wrath, in a rapid utterance and under-tone—

"It is a purpos'd thing, and grows by plot
To curb the will of the nobility."

The effect was instantaneous and called forth repeated thunders of applause. Again,

Cor. "Why this was known before.

Brut. Not to them all.

Cor. *Have you informed them since ?"*

The suddenness of the retort conveyed in the last line, together with the look which accompanied it, confounded the envious cunning, and abashed the petty souls of the tribunes. Also the following excited deservedly great applause.

Cor. "How ! no more ?

As for my country I have shed my blood,

Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs

Coin words till their decay against these—*measles*."

The whole of the force of this passage was concentrated in the word *measles*. Mr. Kemble collected all his energy, pride, scorn, and indignation, which he threw into the expression of that single dissyllable. It was, in truth, an example of the histrionic art, scarcely to be paralleled. The speech commencing with,

"The fires of the lowest hell," &c.

burst upon the audience with an electric flash, like the lightning which shows the approach of the thunder-storm.

In act 4, scene 3, it would be an inexcusable omission not to notice his high deportment towards Aufidius, in the recital of the wrongs he has met from his country ; in his adversity he loses nothing of the spirit of the lofty and commanding Roman. Aufidius shrinks into insignificance in the presence of his exiled conqueror, the fire of whose warlike heart is dignified by the stateliness of his patrician grandeur.

In the last act, Mr. Kemble, if possible, surpasses all his other excellence. His indecisive conflict between affection for his mother, and an eager desire for vengeance on his banishers, was an admirable piece of acting. But when Rome sends forth her matrons to kneel at his feet ; when he accepts the soft endearments of conjugal love ; when he bends his knee to "the honoured mould wherein his trunk was framed ;" when he acknowledges the silent

intercessions of his infant boy ; when he looks upon the mourning garments of Rome's weeping ladies ; while he withstands their united and agonizing prayers ;—he is truly a mighty lord over our feelings. Nor was he less impressive when Nature finally overcomes ; and, bending on the neck of his mother, he exclaims,

“ Rome is saved, but thy son is lost.”

There are so many portions of equal beauty in his performance of this character, that to enumerate them would require more room than the present limits afford. We can cite only one more instance. It is that elevated burst of inspiration which flames out against Aufidius, in the following lines ;

“ If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,
That like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli,
Alone, I did it.—Boy ?—”

This passage, vehement in the poet, was delivered with wonderful force and intensity of passion by the actor ; whoever has heard it, will never forget the mingled rage and astonishment with which he repeats “ Boy ?” It is apparently with difficulty that the word finds a passage from the throat ; but when at last it rushes forth, its emphasis is terrible. His whole soul seems convulsed, and rent asunder by the effort.

This performance, whether it be viewed as a whole, or in detail, amply satisfies the youthful imagination, fresh and glowing from the midst of mountain-scenery, and the cold, fastidious hypercritic, who fastens on what is submitted to his inspection, with an eye only eager to discover imperfections. In various other characters Mr. Kemble has been proudly successful. *Hamlet, Macbeth, Cato, Penruddock, Zanga, Rolla, King John, Lear, Brutus, Pierre, The Stranger, Wolsey, Othello, Prospero*, have all received from him the touches of a master ; but here,—in *Coriolanus*,—he is

“ A falcon, towering in his pride of place.”

FINIS.

THE FOLLOWING IS

A LIST OF MR. KEMBLE'S WORKS.

- 1 BELISARIUS, Tragedy, acted at Hull, 1778, not printed.
- 2 The Female Officer, (sometimes called *The Projects*), Farce, acted at York, 1779, not printed.
- 3 Oh! it's impossible, Comedy, 1780, not printed, altered from the Comedy of Errors.
- 4 The Pannel, Farce, 8vo. 1788.
- 5 Farm House, Comedy, 8vo. 1789.
- 6 Love in many Masks, Comedy, 8vo. 1790.
- 7 Lodoiska, Musical Romance, 8vo. 1794.
- 8 Celadon and Florimel, Comedy, 1796, not printed.
- 9 An Essay on the Characters of Mabeth and Richard III. (Now advertised by Murray.)

ALTERATIONS.

- 1 Maid of Honour, Comedy, 1785, not printed.
- 2 The Pilgrim, Comedy, 8vo. 1787.
- 3 False Friend, Comedy, 1789, not printed.
- 4 Tempest, Comedy, 8vo. 1789; another, 8vo. 1806.
- 5 Coriolanus, 8vo. 1789; another, 8vo. 1806.
- 6 Henry V. Historical Play, not printed, 8vo. 1789, 1801, 1806.
- 7 All's Well that Ends Well. 8vo. 1793.
- 8 Merchant of Venice, 8vo. 1795.
- 9 Merry Wives of Windsor, 8vo. 1797, 1804.
- 10 Much Ado about Nothing, Comedy, 8vo, 1799; another, 8vo. 1810.

LIST OF MR. KEMBLE'S WORKS.

- 11 Way of the World, Comedy, 8vo. 1800.
 - 12 Hamlet, Tragedy, 8vo. 1800; another, 1804.
 - 13 King John, Tragedy, 8vo. 1800; another, 8vo. 1804.
 - 14 King Lear, Tragedy, 8vo. 1800; another, 8vo. 1806.
 - 15 De Moutfort, Tragedy, 1800, not printed.
 - 16 Cymbeline, 8vo. 1801; another, 8vo. 1800.
 - 17 Henry IV, Part I. 8vo. 1803.
 - 18 Macbeth, Tragedy, 8vo. 1803.
 - 19 Measure for Measure, Comedy, 8vo. 1803.
 - 20 Othello, Tragedy, 8vo. 1804.
 - 21 Henry IV, Part II. 8vo. 1804.
 - 22 Henry VIII. Historical Play, 8vo. 1804.
 - 23 Two Gentleman of Verona, Comedy, 8vo. 1808.
 - 24 Richard III. Tragedy, 8vo. 1810.
 - 25 As you like it, 8vo. 1810.
 - 26 Double Dealer, 8vo. no date. And see Alexander the Great, 8vo. 1795, Vol. II. p. 14.
 - 27 Select British Theatre, published by Miller.
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Omission in Page 22.

Soon after Mr. KEMBLE's accession to the theatrical management, it was determined to pull down the old theatre, and build another on the same scite. The new house was finished in 1793, and opened on the 13th of March of that year, with a selection of sacred music, and on the 21st of April following for the performance of dramatic pieces. On the opening night, Mr. KEMBLE spoke a Poetical Address written for the occasion.

W. Wilson, Printer, 4, Greville-Street, London.

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